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THE WILDERNESS ROAD TO KENTUCKY

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The Pinnacle from Cumberland Gap

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THE WILDERNESS ROAD TO KENTUCKY

ITS LOCATION AND FEATURES

BY

WM. ALLEN PUSEY, A.M., M.D.

56 Illustrations
IX Maps

NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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Preface

I BECAME interested in the location of the Wilderness Road through ownership of William Brown's journal of the road, which I inherited from my grandfather, Alfred M. Brown, William Brown's youngest son. To my surprise I found that in the accessible literature only the most meagre details concerning its location are available. The Road had been important enough, it seemed to me, to warrant a record of its accurate location, and I accordingly undertook to make this. Into the undertaking I have put many trips over various parts of the road. It has required vastly more effort than I expected, but it has proved an interesting and stimulating diversion. This investigation was made in 1919, 1920 and 1921.

The location which I have given it has been based, for the most part, upon actual examination of the road itself. I have not attempted to make an extensive examination of historical manuscripts, but it has happened that while making this study I have come upon numerous documents, such as old surveys, deeds, and local maps of the road, and I have used some published records of the Draper Collection. But most of the information has been gotten from personal examination of the road, or from conferences with residents of the various districts through which it passes.

I have imposed through correspondence and interviews upon the good nature of more persons that I can mention. I have been particularly fortunate in getting the help of Colonel James Maret, of Mt. Vernon and Lexington, Ky., and Professor R. M. Addington,

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County Clerk of Scott County, Va. Without their aid my efforts would have been in a large part fruitless. Colonel Maret has had a lifelong interest in the road, and is more familiar, than anyone else that I have met, with the road and the traditions of it in Kentucky. He has not only helped me freely out of his own knowledge, but he has put me in touch with many of his friends between Central Kentucky and Cumberland Gap who have given me information. Professor Addington has in manuscript a History of Southwestern Virginia in which he has recorded a very thorough study of the road in Virginia. He has brought to bear upon this study accurate historical scholarship. He has not only studied the road in Virginia upon the ground, but has gone very fully into the examination of court records and of manuscripts bearing upon it. Through his aid I have been able, I believe, to locate the road precisely between the Block House and Cumberland Gap. And this is the most important part of the investigation, for while the road's approximate location from Cumberland Gap to Harrodsburg is well known there has been, judging from the books on the subject, great uncertainty concerning its course from the Block House to Cumberland Gap. Indeed, I have found diversity of opinion as to the location of sections of the road through Virginia even among residents there who had interest in the subject. It was only through Professor Addington's aid that I was able to clear up these matters.

I think it may be claimed that the location herein given the road is approximately accurate for its entire length. From the Block House in Virginia to the point where the road enters Laurel County, Ky., northwest of Barbourville, I believe the location of the road is exact. Between this point and Brodhead, Ky., there are some unsettled questions in my mind concerning the exact location of the road; but even here the location of the road is, I believe, very nearly correct.

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For collateral historical facts I am much indebted to the following works:

The Wilderness Road by Thomas Speed, Published by John P. Morton & Co., for the Filson Club, Louisville, Ky., 1886.

Boone's Wilderness Road, by Archer Butler Hulburt, published by the Arthur H. Clark Co., Cleveland, Ohio, 1903.

Daniel Boone and the Wilderness Road by H. Addington Bruce, published by The Macmillan Company, New York, 1911.

The Conquest of the Old South West by Archibald Henderson, published by The Century Company, New York, 1920.

Chicago, October 1st, 1921

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THE WILDERNESS ROAD TO KENTUCKY

Chapter I

The Importance of the Settlement of Kentucky and of the Wilderness Road

THE Wilderness Road to Kentucky was one of the very important pioneer roads of the country. Over it struggled the early travelers who led the way in the settlement of the West, and who established the first commonwealth in the wilderness beyond the Mountains. Its history is picturesque and romantic, and is rich in the traditions of the hardships and adventures and achievements of the explorers and hunters and pioneers for whom it was the path to the promised land of Kentucky. And yet, except for a few antiquarians and historians, and for the memories of it which persist among the people along its course, it is forgotten. Its usefulness as a thoroughfare is passed. With the automobile it may come back into its own, but at present no one travels over the whole length of this road that once was the only beaten path to Kentucky and was traveled by tens of thousands of pioneers.

At the beginning of our War for Independence Great Britain, by virtue of her victory over the French in the French and Indian War, held the outposts that were the keys to the country between the Tennessee River and the Great Lakes to the Mississippi on the west. North of the Ohio the territory was in the possession of Indians, who were its permanent occupants. South of the Tennessee the terri-

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tory was similarly occupied by Indians. Between these two vast areas projected Kentucky and a part of Tennessee — a no man's land, occupied permanently by no Indians, but used as a common hunting ground by the Indians of the North and those of the South. In the Northwest Territory the British outposts extended to the west along the Great Lakes as far as Mackinac, with Detroit as headquarters, and to the southwest as far as Kaskaskia and Cahokia on the Mississippi, with Vincennes, on the Wabash, as the chief station. This distribution of the British outposts put them in the position of outflanking the American Colonies, and enabled them to exert an influence over the Indians, which was a weapon of great danger to the western settlements. It was a weapon which, in fact, they used with disastrous effectiveness along the entire Colonial frontier.

The Colonial outposts showed no such western extension. Pittsburgh, a mere fort at a strategic point in the Wilderness, which had been abandoned in 1772, but rebuilt as Fort Dunmore in 1774, was the western outpost. Fort Cumberland, where Cumberland, Md., now stands, was a station on the way to Pittsburgh. There were struggling settlements in the Shenandoah Valley, but except Pittsburgh, the only settlements west of the Allegheny Mountains were those on the headwaters of New River and those on the Holston and Clinch in Virginia and North Carolina. The Virginians and North Carolinians had reached the farthest west of the Colonies, in that interesting and sturdy settlement on the headwaters of the Holston River, famous as the Watauga Settlement.

These outposts represented the extreme frontier of Western Colonial settlement. They were constantly exposed to Indian attacks, and, during the Revolution, would have been wiped out by these attacks, but for the tenacious courage and resourcefulness of their inhabitants. As a matter of fact, these Virginia and North Carolina settlements were themselves a narrow peninsula in the Wilderness. In New York State, in Pennsylvania, and in Maryland

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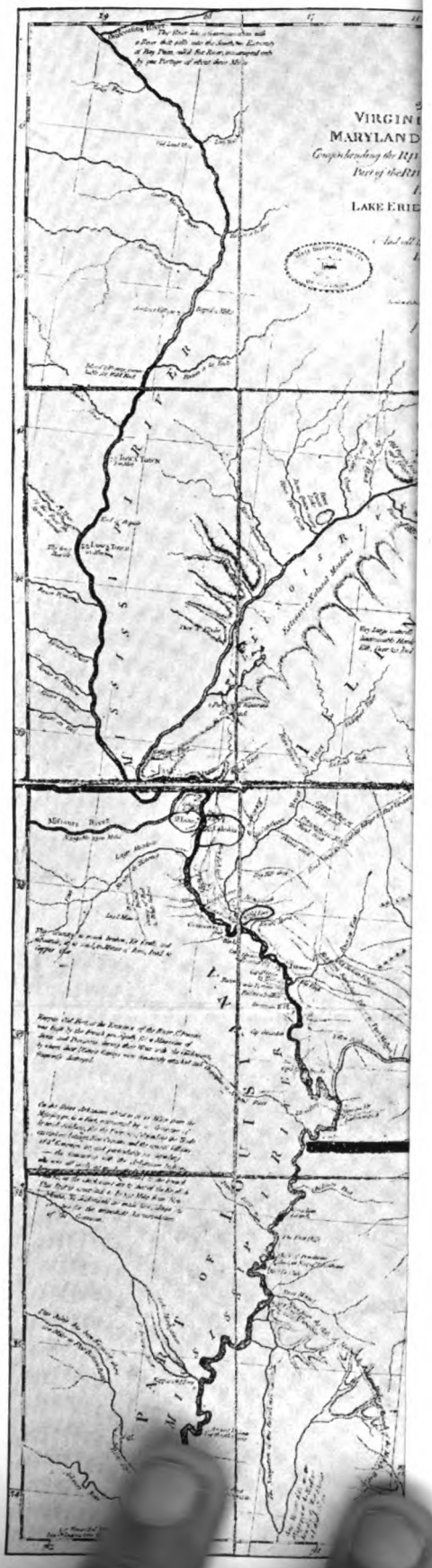

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the frontier was within 100 miles of the Atlantic coast; as Speed pointed out, the Wyoming Massacre in Pennsylvania in 1778 occurred within 100 miles of New York City. Compared with the actual extent of what is now the United States, the Colonies at the beginning of the war stretched as a strip of settled territory along the Atlantic border.

Hutchins' map, published by the British Government in 1778, indicates clearly the advantageous position of the British before the settlement of Kentucky. Considering its date, it depicts with remarkable accuracy the geography of this territory—far more accurately than Filson gives the geography of Kentucky. For example, the map shows the Indian village of Chicago, the prairies of Illinois, Muscle Shoals on the Tennessee River, the fine lands of Central Kentucky, the Falls of the Ohio River, and the Indian War Path from Sandusky to Cumberland Gap. Such a map indicates that the British, through their Canadian and French outposts, were very much more accurately informed of this country than were the Colonial Virginians, and that many travelers had passed over it. On this map is shown the chain of British and French outposts from the Niagara River to the Mississippi: Ft. Niagara; Sandusky; Ft. Detroit; Ft. St. Joseph, with the road from Detroit through St. Joseph to the portage of the Chicago River and from St. Joseph to the Wabash River; Ft. Vincennes; Cahokia; Kaskaskia; and Ft. Massac, with the road from Ft. Vincennes to Kaskaskia and Ft. Massac. It shows Ft. Cumberland and Ft. Pitt, and the outposts of settlement on the headwaters of the Tennessee River. It shows the Kentucky River and gives it that name; the Falls of the Ohio, even Beargrass Creek. But it shows not a single settlement in Kentucky itself.

Filson's map, on the other hand, published six years later—very inaccurate in its natural geographical features—shows Central Kentucky as far west as Louisville dotted with settlements: Harrodsburg, Bardstown, Louisville, Boonesborough, Lexington and a score

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or more of smaller stations. The contrast between these two maps graphically indicates the development of Kentucky in the short space of five years.

This was the situation in 1775. The British in the northwest were behind the Colonies, and, in the event of a peace treaty before they were dislodged, were in position to claim by virtue of possession

Boonesborough. The wall is on the site of the Fort. It was about twice as long as the present wall, extending beyond the dark cottage at the left

at least the area north of the Ohio River and west of the Allegheny Mountains. It was the beginning of a vigorous settlement in the heart of Kentucky that changed this situation. The British recognized the danger of this Kentucky settlement on their southern flank, and from 1775 to 1782 made every effort through their Indian allies to destroy these settlements. They made the effort in a way, it must be said in passing, that is a stain on the reputation of British arms. Although these Kentucky settlements were weak and small, they could not be dislodged. They were able not only to maintain their foothold but

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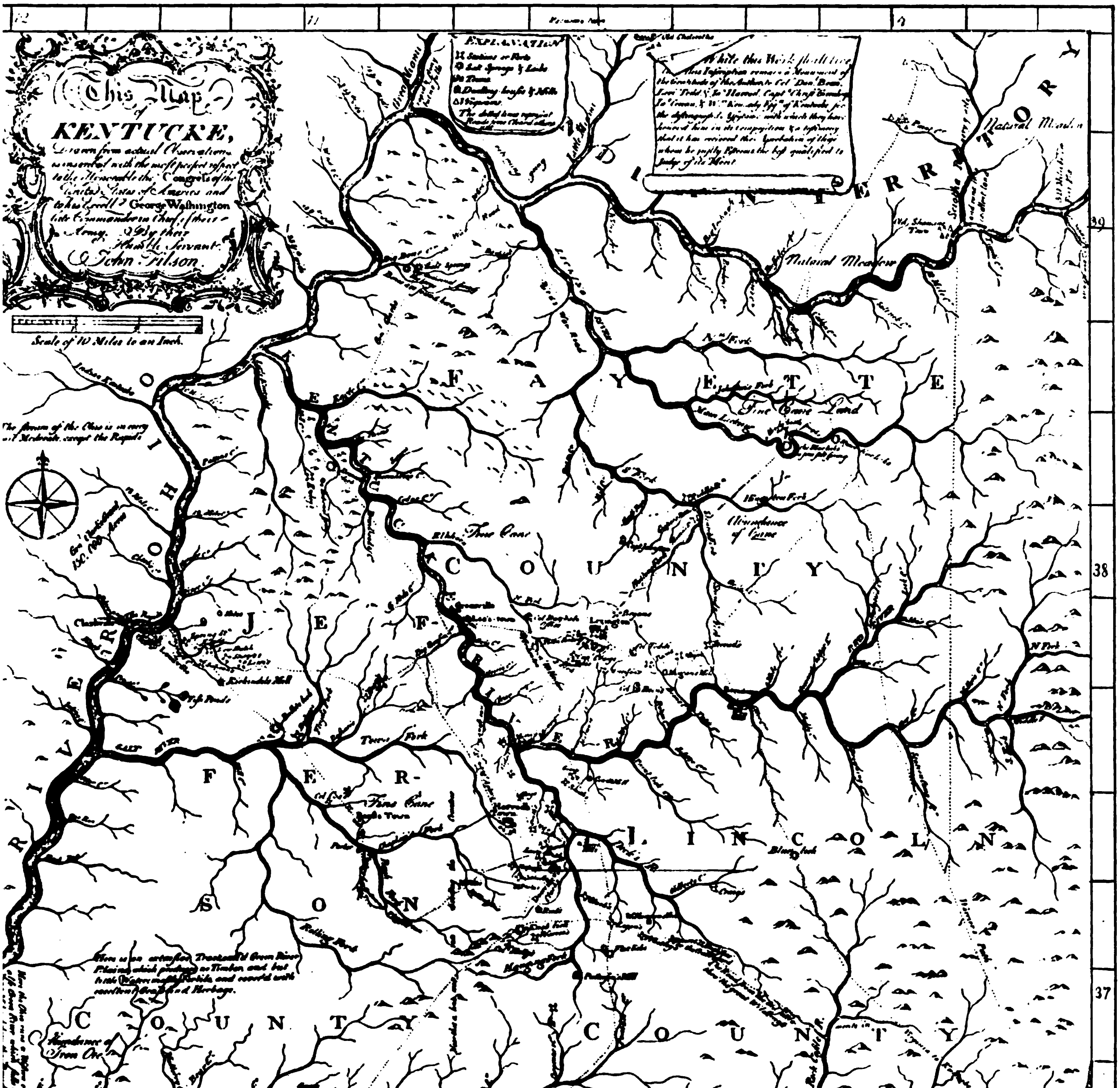

FILSON'S MAP OF KENTUCKY (1784)

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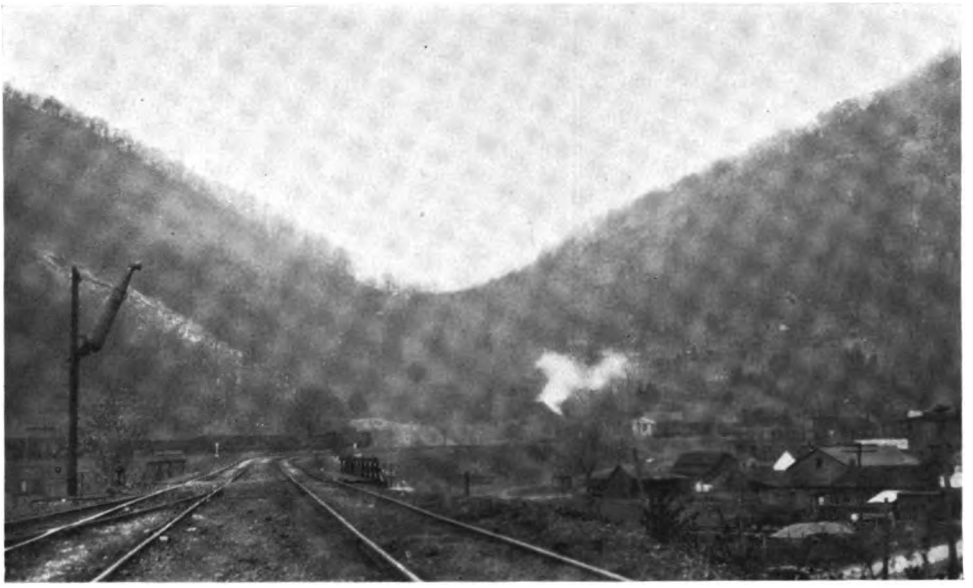

Cumberland Gap
(From Cumberland Gap Village)

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they carried their offensive across the Ohio River time and time again, and by the end of the Revolutionary War had demoralized the Indian settlements in the southern part of Ohio, and had prepared the way for the settlement of that territory.

The permanent settlement of Kentucky began to take form in 1775. The exploration of the state had begun much earlier. Travelers had gone down the Ohio River and touched the state's border for more than a century. In 1750 Dr. Thomas Walker, for the Loyal Land Company of London, went through the mountains of the southeastern part of the state. In the same year Christopher Gist, for the Ohio Company, explored the northeastern part of the state. In 1752 and 1767 John Finley traded in Kentucky on the Ohio River. In 1764 Henry Scaggs went through Cumberland Gap and hunted on the Cumberland. In 1766 James Smith's party of five entered Kentucky by the same route, and another party of five hunters under Isaac Lindsey went to Kentucky from South Carolina. In 1767 James Harrod and Michael Stoner were in the southeastern part of the state. In the Stanwix Treaty of 1768, made at what is now Rome, N. Y., the Six Nations had ceded to Virginia their claims to the country between the Ohio and Tennessee Rivers, and thus had given to Virginia the nominal right to the Kentucky country. The real exploration of Kentucky began, after this treaty, with the hunting parties of 1769 to 1771. In these years the Long Hunters[1] went into Kentucky through Cumberland Gap and hunted along the Cumberland and Green Rivers in the southern part of Eastern Kentucky. At the same time Boone and his party went into Kentucky and hunted on the Kentucky River, and discovered the beautiful plateau of Central Kentucky. This hunting party of 1769, headed by Boone, with five others, including John Finley, left the Yadkin May 1st, 1769. It was later joined by Squire Boone, who

[1]Col. James Knox headed The Long Hunters according to Hulburt; Jos. Drake and Henry Scaggs, according to Henderson.

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alternated with Boone in Kentucky until the spring of 1771. This hunting party of 1769 to 1771 was the first important exploration of the state. It did two important things: It found the wonderfully rich territory of Central Kentucky and it found a practicable way to reach it. Following the expeditions of 1769 to 1771, many hunters

Squire Boone Stone, inscribed with his name and the date 1770. Now in Richmond Court House Yard. Found near Big Hill, Madison County, Ky.

and land-lookers went into Kentucky and brought back to the Colonies glowing reports of the country.

By 1775, accordingly, the Virginia and North Carolina frontiersmen were eager for the Kentucky country. In 1774 James Harrod and a party of 35, had already attempted to establish a settlement at Harrodsburg, but had left it on receipt of the news from Boone of the danger of Indian hostilities. In 1775 Harrod and his party

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Boone's Gap. Where his trail to Boonesborough passed over the watershed between the Cumberland and the Kentucky Rivers

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were back at Harrodsburg a month before Boone reached Boonesborough. It is a fact, therefore, that the settlement of Kentucky would have begun in the spring of 1775 without any artificial stimulation. Just at this moment, however, the settlement of the state received an impetus from the daring scheme of Colonel Richard Henderson and his famous Transylvania Company. Henderson had conceived the idea of a great proprietary colony in Kentucky, like Lord Baltimore's colony in Maryland, and Penn's colony on the Delaware. It was a visionary scheme and the company was dissolved in December, 1776, a year and a half after the foundation of Boonesborough, but it nevertheless performed a useful service in placing some organized strength behind the infant settlements of 1775.

In February, 1775, Henderson and his party met the Cherokee Indians at Sycamore Shoals, at Watauga, and early in March, (March 17th, 1775), made a treaty with them by which they ceded to the Transylvania Company the territory lying between the Kentucky and Cumberland Rivers, and a strip of land through Virginia giving access to it. It made little difference in the subsequent events that the Cherokees were ceding a territory to which they had the vaguest title and that Henderson was claiming rights that belonged to Virginia. Henderson immediately started upon his plan of settlement of Kentucky. Boone had been his agent in bringing the Indians to negotiations and in the negotiations at Sycamore Shoals, and Henderson had already engaged him to take out a party to Kentucky, to locate the trail, and to select a suitable spot for the first Transylvania settlement.

With the spring of 1775 Harrod's party went back to Harrodsburg; Boone led the Transylvania party to Boonesborough; and the flow of permanent settlers into Kentucky was started. When Boonesborough was founded there were, according to Bruce's estimate, one hundred pioneers in Kentucky; Collin's (History of Kentucky, Vol. II, 523) estimates the number at three hundred.

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That they were eagerly searching out the country is shown by the fact that Henderson, who left Watauga for Kentucky March 20th, ten days behind Boone, met on his way to Boonesborough about sixty discouraged pioneers returning to Virginia. At first, owing to Indian hostilities, the growth of the Kentucky settlements was slow. Their existence was even threatened, but they never succumbed, and after their first struggle they grew with a rapidity that, in view of their isolation, is unparalleled even among the phenomenal records of frontier development in this country.

There were, then, probably more than a hundred white persons in the whole state of Kentucky at the time of the founding of Boonesborough in April, 1775. By 1783 it is estimated that there were 12,000. At this time the Revolution was over, and the presence of these 12,000 people had been an important factor in determining for the United States the possession of Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. By the spring of 1784 it is estimated that there were 20,000 inhabitants in Kentucky. During 1784, 30,000 immigrants—men, women and children—are believed to have come into Kentucky by the Wilderness Road from Virginia and North Carolina. By the census of 1790 Kentucky had a population of over 75,000. At the same time there had been almost no growth west in New York State, and little in Pennsylvania. In ten years more, by 1800, the census showed that Kentucky had a population of 220,000, nearly as much as Connecticut, two thirds that of Maryland, more than one half that of Massachusetts, and one third that of Pennsylvania. In the ten years between 1790 and 1800 New York State on the Atlantic seaboard gained 250,000 population; Kentucky 600 miles from the seaboard, and 200 miles from the frontier outposts of the eastern Colonies, gained 147,000. In 1790 its population was 14th among 16 states and territories. In 1800 it was 9th in population, having already passed four of the original Colonies. The settlement of Kentucky up to 1795 was an isolated phenomenon in the west.

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The census of 1790 gave the entire population of the territory north of the Ohio River at 4,280. Marietta and Cincinnati, the oldest colonial settlements in the west north of the Ohio River, began in 1788, six years after the last organized raid of any large party of Indians into Kentucky, and when Kentucky had a population of nearly 70,000 people. The actual settlement of the country north of the Ohio River did not really begin until 1795 after the battle of Fallen Timber in 1794 when General Anthony Wayne, by his victory over the Indians, finally opened the country to white settlement. Three years before that, on June 1st, 1792, Kentucky had been made a state.

Thus there grew up in Kentucky a vigorous state, which, for twenty years, was an island of civilization in an unsettled wilderness that extended from the Great Lakes almost to the Gulf, and from the Allegheny Mountains to the indefinite west. This state was separated by two hundred miles from the extreme western outposts of the eastern Colonies, and by five hundred miles from the old eastern settlements. Through these two hundred miles of wilderness the state had only two lines of communication with the eastern Colonies: One was over the mountain roads to Pittsburgh and down the Ohio; the other through Cumberland Gap by the Wilderness Road. The Ohio River route furnished little of the immigration until after 1795. Previous to that time the dangers from Indian hostilities on the north side of the Ohio River, and the tediousness of the voyage, caused that route to be used by few of the outgoing pioneers. Going east against the flow of the river it was practically unusable. It is, in fact, a shock to our conceptions of the lines of least resistance in travel to find that even as late as the time Kentucky became a state the Wilderness Road through Cumberland Gap was the way east for travelers from the lower Ohio Valley; that the land route to St. Louis and Vincennes lay through Cumberland Gap; and that a military order of May, 1792, for a trip from Fort Washington,

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(Cincinnati) to Philadelphia, specified as the line of travel the Wilderness Road through Cumberland Gap.

In very fact the Wilderness Road for twenty years after the settlement of Kentucky was its only practicable line of communication with civilization. Kentucky was settled over it. A hundred thousand pioneers traveled it before it was made a wagon road. And these hundred thousand travelers were settlers—men, women and children—bent upon building a permanent home in the wilderness. They brought their household goods, their domestic animals, their books, and even their printing press. They founded a society whose culture was on a par with that of the eastern Colonies. Preachers, teachers, physicians, and lawyers without end, came with them. All of this was done over a bridle path, two hundred miles long, extending from the Holston settlement in Virginia to the plateau of Central Kentucky. It is facts such as these that made the Wilderness Road so important and should preserve its fame.

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Chapter II

Boone's Part in the Wilderness Road

THE actual locating of the Wilderness Road dates from Boone's expedition to establish Boonesborough in March 1775. The road cannot justly be called Boone's Wilderness Road, for others did their part in finding its course, but it was more nearly Boone's road than anyone's else. As he said in his letter to Governor Shelby, "I first marked out that road in March 1775".

After the treaty at Sycamore Shoals, Henderson did well to choose Boone to mark the road to his land, and to search out the best place for his settlement in it. Boone had probably been to Kentucky oftener, and stayed there longer, than any other man. Kentucky had been his goal for many years. As early as 1767 he had undertaken to find his way into Kentucky by going up the valleys of the Holston and Clinch and trying to reach the headwaters of the west fork of the Big Sandy River and following this to the Ohio. In this attempt he had failed. He had actually gone to Kentucky in May, 1769, with a party, and stayed there until the spring of 1771. If he is entitled to the credit for discovering the road to the heart of Kentucky, and he seems to be entitled to this credit, he made the discovery on this trip of 1769–71. In October, 1773, he had undertaken to lead a party for settlement, but had been turned back by the disastrous encounter with the Indians when his son James was killed. It seems likely that between 1771 and 1773 he made two other trips to Kentucky. In June, 1774, he had, with Michael Stoner, made his famous trip to the Falls of the Ohio as Governor Dunmore's agent to warn surveying parties in Kentucky of the outbreak of

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Indian hostilities. On this journey he and Stoner made the trip on foot from the Clinch River to the Falls of the Ohio and return in sixty-two days.

When, therefore, Henderson engaged him to lay off a road to Kentucky, Boone was probably, more than any one else, familiar with the course that this road should follow. But it was not Boone's

Tablet marking supposed site of killing of Boone's son James in Oct. 1773. Actual site was probably on Wallen Ridge

achievement to have discovered the way through Cumberland Gap, and when he laid off his road in 1775 he was only one of many persons who were familiar with the route. The credit of discovering the way through Cumberland Gap belongs to Dr. Thomas Walker. He found the way down Powell Valley, through Cumberland Gap, and through the gap at Pineville, where the Cumberland River cuts through Pine Mountain. He had, in fact, twenty-five years before given the names to Powell River, Cumberland Gap, and the Cumber-

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land River, names which were familiar when Boone started on his famous road-making enterprise.

Boone's attention had probably first been called to the road to Kentucky through Powell Valley and Cumberland Gap by John Finley, whom Boone had met in Braddock's campaign, and who was Boone's companion on his trip to Kentucky in 1769–71. By 1775 so many hunters and explorers (Finley, Scaggs, Smith, Lindsay, Harrod, Stoner, McAfee) had gone into Kentucky by way of Cumberland Gap that the general route was well known. But it was Boone's specific job to mark a road; and this he did so successfully that the road has remained practically where he placed it from that day to this, and along its general course the railway of to-day has found its location.

Boone's party on this trip to Kentucky consisted of about thirty persons. They started March 10th from Long Island, just above the mouth of the South Fork of the Holston, or from Fort Patrick Henry, two miles further west, where the North Fork and South Fork of the Holston join. From Long Island to Cumberland Gap there was a path; for Martin's Station was then situated twenty miles from Cumberland Gap, and Henderson records he left his wagons there. It may be said in passing, as Prof. Addington suggested to me, that any one familiar with the old road can hardly understand how it was possible for Henderson to get his wagons as far as Martin's Station at that time. Beyond the point where the trail was defined Boone marked the way by blazing the trees.

Boone knew the route and the journey was made quickly. The party left the Holston on March 10th and on March 25th was at the site of Fort Estill, within fifteen miles of the site of Boonesborough. In fifteen days they had covered the two hundred miles through the wilderness and marked the road. Through the mountains of Kentucky the trip was difficult, and after they turned north towards Boonesborough, leaving the trail to the Northwest near Rock Castle

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River, they had, according to Felix Walker, to cut their way through cane and brush for twenty or thirty miles of untraced wilderness. At the site of Fort Estill, near Richmond, Ky., the party almost met disaster from an Indian attack in the early morning of March 25th. In this attack two men were killed, and one other, Felix Walker, badly

Where Boone's fight of March 25, 1775, occurred. The site of Ft. Estill

injured. Boone in reporting this attack to Henderson tells him: "We stood on the ground and guarded our baggage till day and lost nothing. We have about fifteen miles to Kentuck." (The Kentucky River at Otter Creek). The attack caused Boone to delay at this point nine days. Then he moved on to the mouth of Otter Creek on the Kentucky River on April 6th, 1775.

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Long Island and the Holston

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Henderson following Boone left Watauga March 20th and arrived at Boonesborough April 20th. Near Rock Castle River, where Henderson turned north to Boonesborough, Logan and some other members of the party who had joined Henderson in Powell Valley continued northwest along the older trace to the present site of

Otter Creek near Boonesborough

Stanford where they founded Logan's Fort, or St. Asaph. The trail to Logan's Fort was on the way to the Falls of the Ohio, and it subsequently became the great road to Central Kentucky leading through Crab Orchard, Stanford, Danville, Harrodsburg, Bardstown and the Salt Works near Shepherdsville to Louisville. The trail to Crab Orchard, thus marked out by Boone and Logan, remained, through pioneer days the Wilderness Road to Kentucky.

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Chapter III

Journals of the Wilderness Road

SPEED resurrected and first published in his "Wilderness Road" four journals of the Wilderness Road: Brown's, Filson's, Speed's and Calk's. In addition there are the journals of Felix Walker and Henderson. Walker's account of Boone's party in 1775 was made in the form of a biographical statement about 1824. Henderson's journal which is preserved by the Wisconsin Historical Society, is a brief recital of the experiences on the journey of his party which followed Boone's party 10 days later. It does not give the landmarks of the road in a way to locate them accurately, but it gives some account of the happenings along the road, and thus some idea of the difficulties of travel. But in this respect it does not compare with the journal of Calk who was with Henderson's party from Martin's Station to Boonesborough. Brown's, Filson's and Speed's journals are especially valuable in locating the road, because each gives landmarks of the road with distances between. Brown's itinerary extends from Hanover, Va., to Harrodsburg, Ky.; Filson's from Philadelphia to Louisville, and Speed's from Charlotte C. H., Va., to Rock Castle River. Speed's journal is not complete as it is defaced in places, and ends at Rock Castle River. I have, in the table below, given only the landmarks between the Block House and Crab Orchard, the part which really constituted the road through the wilderness. It is by identifying these landmarks with present points that the road can be accurately located.

As it will be seen Brown's journal is much the most detailed: From the Block House to Crab Orchard he gives 32 points, Filson

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STATIONS ON THE WILDERNESS ROAD BETWEEN
THE BLOCK HOUSE AND CRAB ORCHARD

	Journals			
	Brown's	Filson's	Speed's	
1. To Block House	*	*	*	Block House is given by all these journals.
2. To North Fork Holston	2	..	..	"Holstein," Brown & Filson.
3. To Moccasin Gap	5	..	..	"Big Moccasin Gap," Brown.
4. To Fariss'	..	..	5	At Gate City.
5. To Clinch River	11	..	12	At Speer's Ferry.
6. To Ford of Stock Creek	2	..	..	At Clinchport.
7. To Little Flat Lick	5	..	..	At Duffield.
8. To No. Fork of Clinch.	1	..	..	At Duffield.
10. To Powell Mtn.	1	33	..	At Kane's Gap near Duffield.
11. To Scott's Sta.	..	..	12	
12. To Wallen Ridge	5	3	..	"Wallen" or "Wallan Ridge," Brown. "Walden's Ridge," Filson.
13. To Valley Station	5	4	..	
14. To Powell River	2	..	10	
15. To Glade Spring	4	..	..	At Jonesville.
16. To Martin's Sta.	19	25	2	Near Rose Hill, Lee Co. Va.
17. To Big Spring	12	.	..	Not certainly located.
18. To Cumberland Gap	8	20	3	"Cumberland Mountain Gap" Brown.
19. To Yellow Creek	2	..	..	
20. To Cumberland River	13	13	15	
21. To Flat Lick	9	9	9	"Big Flat Lick" Brown.
22. To Stinking Creek	..	2	2	
23. To Little Richland Creek	10	..	..	
24. To Big Richland Creek	1	7	7	
25. Down Richland Creek	..	8	..	
26. To Robinson Creek	10	..	..	
27. To Raccoon Spring	1	6	14	Not certainly located.
28. To Laurel River	2	2	2	
29. To Little Laurel River	5	..	..	
30. To Raccoon Creek	8	..	..	Cannot locate any point where road touched Raccoon Creek.
31. To Hazel Patch	4	15	15	
32. To Rock Castle Creek	6	..	..	Hazel Patch Creek, (modern name.)
33. To Rock Castle Riv..	7	10	10	

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	Journals			
	Brown's	Filson's	Speed's	
34. To Scaggs' Creek	5	..	..	Skagg Creek on U. S. Map. Brown's name is correct; the creek was named for Capt. Scaggs.
35. To Head of Dix River . . .	15	..	..	Dick's River. Brown's name is better; the river was named for a negro Dick, killed by Indians.
36. To English Station	8	25	..	
37. To Crab Orchard	3	3	..	
Total distance	191	185		

gives 17, and Speed 15. Brown's journal was made in 1782; Filson's, published in 1784, was probably made about the same time; and Speed's in 1790. Filson gives two landmarks which are not given by Brown, and Speed two stations given by neither of the others, probably because eight years earlier, when Brown and Filson went over the road, these two stations did not exist. The total number of landmarks given by the three journals from the Block House to Crab Orchard is 37.

It is interesting to compare the estimated distances between points as these journals give them. The distance from the Block House to Crab Orchard as given by Brown is 191 miles, by Filson as 185 miles. At many points the journals agree exactly, or very closely, in the estimated distances between points. For example: From Wallen Ridge to Valley Station Brown gives as 5 miles, Speed 4 miles; from Valley Station to Martin's Station Brown gives 25 miles, Speed 25 miles; from Martin's Station to Cumberland Gap Brown gives 20 miles, Speed gives 20 miles; from Cumberland Gap to Cumberland River Brown gives 15 miles, Filson 13 miles, Speed 15 miles; from Cumberland River to Flat Lick all three give 9 miles;

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Wm. Brown's Tour to Kentucky in 1782; [illegible]

		Miles
to Richmond	Henrico	18
Widow Simpsons	Chesterfd.	14
Powhatan Co. House		16
Jos. Thompson at the fork of the road		8
Long Ordinary	Buckingham	9
Hodletts on Willis Cr.		8
Mrs. Saunders	Cumberland	3
Widow Thompson	passing Hoods & Swiney	27
Capt Hunters		5
Thompsons on the long Mo.	Campbell	5
Dupreists		6
New London		10
Liberty Town		16
Yearlys at Goose Cr.	Bedford	12
McLoland at the blue Ridge Gap		6
Big flatt Lick		10
Fort Lewis	Botetourt	12
Hans Meadows		20
English's Ferry, New River		12
Fort Chizwell		30
Atkins Ordinary		19
Mid. fork Holstin over		266

Facsimile page from Brown's Journal. Somewhat enlarged

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[illegible] Occurrences Sett out from Hano
[illegible] day 27th May 1782 arrived at the Block
House about the 1st Week in July. the Road from
Hanover to this place, is generally very good, crossing
the Blue Ridge it is not bad. there is not more than
a small Hill with some windings to go over
neither is the Alegany Mountain by any means
difficult at this Gap, there is one or two
high Hills about New River and Fort
Chigwell, the Ford of New River is rather bad
therefore we thought it adviseable to go
in the Ferry Boat, this is generally a good
Watered Road as far as the Block House —
we waited hereabouts near two Weeks of
Company and then sett out for the Wilderness
with 12 Men & 10 Guns this being thursday 18th July the Road from
this untill you get over Wallens Ridge
generally is bad some part very much so
particularly about Stock 6th and Stock 6
Ridge, ~~this~~ it is a very Mountainous Country
here about, but there is some fine Land
the bottoms near the Water, courses in
narrow Slipes ~~and always~~ it will be but
thin settled Country whenever [illegible]

Facsimile page from Brown's Journal. Somewhat enlarged

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from Flat Lick to Stinking Creek Filson and Speed both give 2 miles; from Stinking Creek to Richland Creek both give 7 miles; from Raccoon Spring to Laurel River all give 2 miles; from Laurel River to Hazel Patch Brown gives 17 miles, Filson and Speed give 15 miles; from Rock Castle River to Crab Orchard Brown gives 31 miles and Filson gives 28 miles. And it is very striking when one goes over the road to-day to find how accurately these early travelers estimated distances between points. They were evidently the estimates of the distances which had been accepted along the road.

All of the landmarks of the road, when their identification with modern landmarks has been made, are easily located on the topographical quadrangle maps of the United States Geological Survey.

Brown's Journal[1]

Brown's Journal, preserved in the University of Chicago Library, is the fullest journal, and the most thoughtful in all respects. It gives in addition to the stations and distances, "Observations and Occurrences" of the journey. These are judicious observations of the country and the road, but contain little detail of the happenings of the journey. He is concerned almost completely with the road and the country through which he is passing.

He covers the road as far as the Block House in one paragraph, as follows: "the road from Hanover to this place is generally very good, crossg. the Blue ridge it is not bad, there is not more than a small Hill with some windings to go over neither is the Alegany mountain by any means difficult at this Gap, there is one or two high Hills about New River and Fort Chizwell, the Ford of New River

[1] Both of Brown's Journals are published in full in Speed's "Wilderness Road." His Journal of The Wilderness Road is published in Hulburt's "Wilderness Road" and his Journal of The Ohio River Route in Hulburt's "Braddock's Road." The Arthur H. Clark Co.

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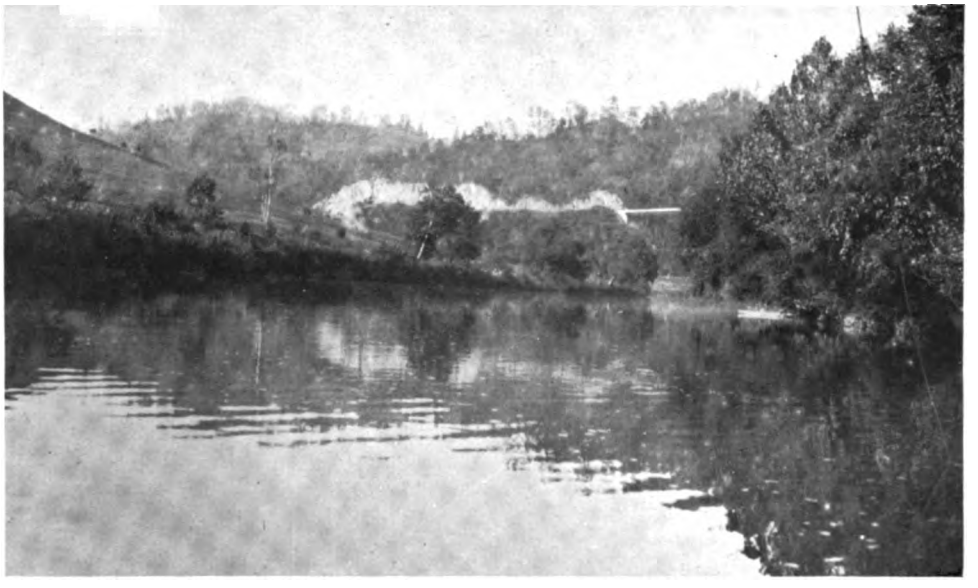
is rather bad therefore we thought it advisable to cross in the Ferry Boat, this is generally a good watered road as far as the Block House.—"

"We waited hereabouts (at the Block House) near two weeks for company and then sett out for the Wilderness with 12 men and 10 guns this being Thursday 18th July—— the road from this (the Block



Clinch River above old Ford. Deepened by a mill dam

House) untill you get over Wallens Ridge generally is bad, some part very much so, particularly about Stock Cr. and Stock Cr. Ridge, it is a very mountainous country hereabouts, but there is some fine land in the bottoms near the water courses in narrow slipes, it will be but a thin settled country whenever it is settled."

No one could briefly describe the road more accurately or pass a better judgment upon the country between the Block House and Powell Mountain than is given in these few sentences.

"the fords of Holstein, and Clinch are both good in dry weather, but in a rainy season you are often obliged to Raft over, from thence

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The Ford (of the North Fork) of the Holston

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Broad acres in Powell Valley

On Wilderness Road at Rose Hill in Powell Valley, near site of Martin's Station

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Cumberland Mountain Range, from Powell Valley

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the Road along down Powels Valey, untill you get to Cumberland Gap, is pretty good this Valey is formed by Cumberland Mo. on the N. W. and Powels Mo. on the S. E. and appears to bear from N. E. S. Westardly and is I supps. about 100 miles in length, & from 10 to 12 miles in breadth, the land generally is good and is an exceeding well watered country, as well as the country on Holstein River abounding

The head of Dix River, Brodhead, Kentucky

with fine springs and little Brooks—for about 50 miles as you travel along the Valey Cumberland Mountain appears to be a very high ridge of white Rocks inaccessible in most places to either Man or Beast and affords a wild romantic prospect, the way thro' the Gap is not very difficult, but from its situation travellers may be attacked in some places crossing the mo. by the enemy to a very great disadvantage."

This description of Powell Valley and Cumberland Mountain is in every way accurate. The only point where one might differ is upon the statement that the way through the Gap is not very difficult —but "difficult" is a relative term.

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"from thence untill you pass Rockcastle River there is very little good Road this reach of country is very mountainous and Badly watered along the trace especially for springs, there is some good land on the watercourses—Just on this side Cumberland River appears to be a good tract, and withing a few years I expect have a settlement on it—some parts of the road is very miry in rainy weather, the Ford of Cumberland and Rockcastle are both good unless the waters be too high, after you cross rock Castle there is a few high Hills, and the rest of the way tolerable good, the land appears to be rather weak chiefly Timb. wh. Oak &c. the first of the Kentucky waters you touch is the Head of Dicks River Just 8 miles from English's, here we arrived Thursday 25th inst. which is just 7 days since we started from the Block House—"

"Monday 29th inst. I got to Harrodsburg and saw Bro. James—the next day we parted as he was about setting off on a Journey to Cumberland—On Monday Augt. 19th Col. John Todd with a party of 182 of our men attacked a body of Indians suppd. to be 6 or 7 Hundred at the Blue Lick, and was defeated wh. the loss of 65 person missing & slain—in this action Bro. James fell."

His characterization of the road and the country from Cumberland Gap to Rock Castle River is true. It is all mountainous and inhospitable to the farmer. The tract just on this side of Cumberland River, which he says appears to be good, must have been in the valley of Yellow Creek, either where Middlesboro now stands or further down. This is level and doubtless appeared fertile, but his judgment of this as good land was at fault. He never lived up to his expectation of having a settlement on it.

Brown's journal is contained in a small manuscript book, which also contains his journal of his journey to Kentucky by Braddock's Road and the Ohio River in 1790. The journals are written in ink in his hand, and they may have been transcribed from earlier copies. The other contents of the book are interesting as throwing light

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upon the character of some of these pioneers. They consist of classical poems, memoranda upon inventions and scientific facts, and prescriptions for various ailments. The whole book is the work of a serious minded intelligent man with a bent for knowledge. There is nothing in the remotest way suggesting the illiterate, irresponsible ruffian that the pioneer is often described to be. And that Brown was not an unusual type among pioneers is shown by the rapid cultural development of the early settlements of Kentucky.

Calk's Journal[1]

Calk's Journal is preserved in the collection of Calk papers owned by Mr. Price Calk, Hingston Dale Farm, Mt. Sterling, Ky. What Brown's journal lacks in human interest is supplied by Calk's. He wrote English as it sounded to him, but he had a picturesque style and it would be hard to find a more vivid account of the happenings of the road. There is no other contemporaneous document that compares with Calk's journal in this respect. He describes not the country, but what happened to his party on the journey. This account is virtually the journal of Henderson's journey to Kentucky, for Calk traveled with Henderson from Martin's Station to Boonesborough. And he wrote the epic of the road.

"William Calk his Jornal

1775 March 13th mond I set out from prince wm. to travel to Caintuck on tuesday Night our company all Got together at Mr. Prises on Rapadan Which was ABraham hanks philip Drake Eanock Smith Robert Whitledge & my Self thear abrams Dogs leg got broke By Drake's Dog—"

* * *

"fryd 17th we Start Early cross the Ridge the wind Blows very hard & cold and lodge at James loyls."

---

[1] Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Vol. 7 No. 4, March 1921. (An accurate copy of Calk's Journal). Also published in Speed's "Wilderness Road."

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"wedns 22d we Start early and git to foart chissel whear we git some good loaf Bread & good Whiskey."

* * *

"fryday ye 24th we Start early & turn out of the wagon Road to go across the mountains to go by Danil Smiths we lose Drive Come to a turabel mountain that tried us all almost to death to git over it & we lodge this night on the Lawrel fork of holston under a grait mountain & Roast a fine fat turkey for our Suppers & Eat it without aney Bread"

"Satrd 25 we Start Early travel over Some more very Bad mountains one that is caled Clinch mountain & we git this night to Danil Smiths on clinch and there we Staid till thursday morning on tuesday night & wednesday morning it Snowed Very hard and was very colad & we hunted a good deal there while we Staid in Rough mountains & Kild three Deer & one turkey Eanock ABram & I got lost tuesday night & it asnowing & Should a lain in the mountains had not I had a pocket Compas By which I Got in a littel in the night and fired guns and they heard them and caim in By the Repoart."

"thursd 30th we Set out again & went down to Elk gardin and there Suplid our Selves With Seed Corn & irish tators then we went on alittel way I turned my hors to drive afore me & he got Scard Ran away threw Down the Saddel Bags & Broke three of our powder goards & ABrams flask Burst open a walet of corn & lost a good Deal & made aturrabel flustration amongst the Reast of the horses Drakes mair ran against a sapling & noct it down we cacht them all again & went on & lodged at John Duncans"

"fryd 31st we suplayed our Selves at Dunkans with a 108 pounds of Bacon & went on again to Brileys mill & suployd our Selves with meal & lodged this night at clinch By a large cainbrake & cuckt our Suppers."

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This is vivid enough for anybody, and it tells the sort of trials that the travelers endured.

"April satd first this morning there is ice at our camp half inch thick we Start Early & travel this Day along a verey Bad hilley way cross one creek whear the horses almost got Mired Some fell in & all wet their loads we cross Clinch River & travell till late in the

Indian Creek

Night & camp on cove creek having two men with us that wair pilates"

"Sund 2d this morning avery hard frost we Start Early travel over powels mountain and camp on the head of Powels valey whear there is verey good food"

"mond 3d we Start Early travel down the valey cross powelt River go some throw the woods with out aney track cross some Bad hils Git into hendersons Road camp on a creek in powels valey; tuesday 4th Raney we Start about 10 oclock and git down to capt martins in the valey where we over take Coln. henderson & his companey Bound for Caintuck & there we camp this Night there they were Broiling & Eating Beef without Bread; Wednesday ye 5th Breaks away fair & we go on down the valey & camp on indian Creek we had this creek to cross maney times & very Bad Banks ABrams saddle turned & the load all fell in we got out this Eavening and Kill two Deer"

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"thurd 6th this morning is ahard frost & we wait at camp for Coln. henderson & companey to come up they come up about 12 oclock & we Join with them and camp there Still this night waiting for Some part of the companey that had their horses Ran away with their packs; fryday ye 7th this morning is avery hard Snowey morning & we Still continue at camp Being in number about 40 men & Some Neagros this Eavening Comes aletter from Capt Boon at caintuck of the indians doing mischief and Some turns back"
William Calk His Jurnal April ye 8th 1775 Satterday
Satrd 8th We all pact up & Started Crost Cumberland gap about one oclock this Day we Met a great maney peopel turnd Back for fear of the indians but our Company goes on Still with good courage we come to a very ugly Creek With Steep Banks & have it to Cross Several times on this Creek we camp this night" (Yellow Creek.)

* * *

"tuesday 11th this is a very loury morning & like for Rain But we all agree to Start Early we Cross Cumberland River & travel Down it about 10 miles through Some turrabel Cainbrakes as we went down abrams mair Ran into the River with Her load & Swam over he followd her & got on her & made her Swim Back agin it is a very Raney Eavening we take up camp near Richland Creek they Kill a Beef Mr. Drake Bakes Bread with out Washing his hands we Keep Sentry this Night for fear of the indians —"

"Wednesday 12th this is a Raney morning But we pack up & go on we come to Richland creek it is high we toat our packs over a tree & swim our horses over & there We meet another Companey going Back they tell Such News ABram & Drake is afraid to go aney further there we camp this night —"

"thursday 13th this morning the weather Seems to Brake & Be fair ABram & Drake turn back we go on & git to loral River we come to a creek before wheare we are obliged to unload & to toate our packs over on alog this day we meet about 20 more turning Back we are

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Wilderness Road. On the way up east side of Cumberland Gap

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Yellow Creek

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obligd to toat our packs over loral River & Swim our Horses one hors Ran in with his pack and lost it in the River & they got it '' (again).

"fryday 14th this is a clear morning with a Smart frost we go on & have avery mirey Road and camp this Night on a creek of loral River & are Surprised at camp By a wolf —

* * *

"Sunday 16th cloudy & warm we Start Early & go on about 2 mile down the River and then turn up a creek that we crost about 50 times Some very Bad foards with a great Deal of very good land on it the Eavening we git over to the Waters of Caintuck & go alittel Down the creek & there we camp keep Sentry the forepart of the night it Rains very har(d) all night —" (over Boone's Gap to the head of Brushy Fork of Silver Creek.)

* * *

"tuesday 25th in the Eavening we git us a plaise at the mouth of the creek & Begin clearing this day we Begin to live with out Bread

"Wednesday 26th We Begin Building us a house & a plaise of Defence to keep the indians off

* * *

"Satterday 29th We git our house kivered with Bark & move our things into it at Night and Begin houskeeping Eanock Smith Robert Whitledge & my self

"monday May ye first I go out to look for my mair and Saw 4 Bofelos the Being the first Ever I saw & I shot one of them but did not git him."

We owe a great deal to Calk. He does not make it necessary for us to imagine what were the incidents and trials of the journey to Kentucky. He set these down for us at the time of their happening. They got some corn meal and good whiskey; they shot a deer and some turkeys, and saw some buffalos. Some of them were doubtless particular, for Calk takes pains to note that Drake baked bread

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without washing his hands. Later they lived without bread. Fear of Indians disturbed them. They were concerned about the weather; the roads were miry; the creeks were ugly and had steep banks, and they had to cross them many times. Sometimes they were swollen and the party had to "tote" their packs across on logs and swim the horses. The packs came off in mid-stream; the horses ran away; and altogether there were at times such "flustrations" as would make a less imperturbable man than Calk record a complaint. That he never uttered a serious one showed the school of experience in which he had been trained.

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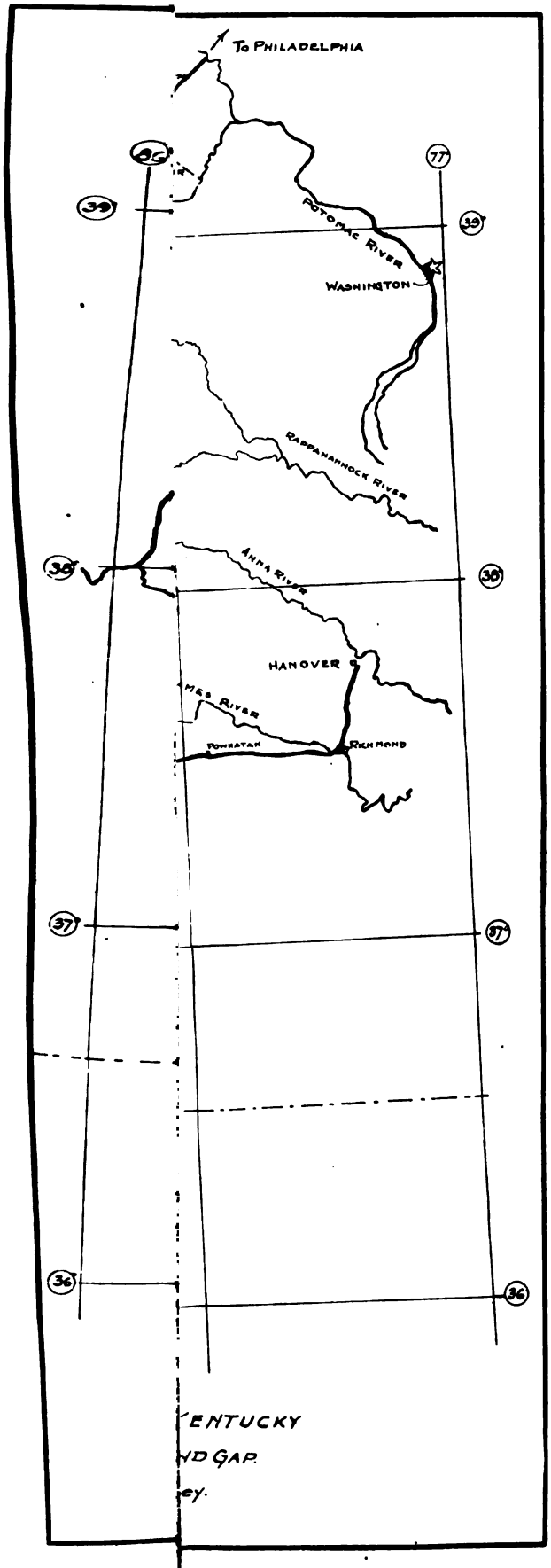

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Chapter IV

The General Course and Features of the Road

THE Wilderness Road began at the Block House in Virginia, which was situated five miles northeast of the South Fork of the Holston River at the mouth of Reedy Creek and nearly a mile north of the North Carolina—now Tennessee—line. Its early importance lay in two facts: (1) It stood at the entrance to the wilderness; it was the last station on the road to Kentucky in the Holston settlement. (2) Also, it was the point where the road from the northeast from Virginia and Pennsylvania and the road from the southeast from North Carolina met. East of this point several roads converged to form these two main thoroughfares; west of it there was one lone trail to Kentucky.

The great thoroughfare from the northeast resulted from two main lines of travel, one coming out of Philadelphia through Lancaster, York, Gettysburg, Abbottstown and Hagerstown crossing the Potomac at Wadkin's Ferry, thence through Martinsburg, Md., and up the Shenandoah Valley through Winchester, Staunton, and Lexington. It continued in the trough between the mountains, across various streams that make up the headwaters of the James River to the Great Lick, where Roanoke, Va., is now located, and Salem. Between Salem and Ingles' Ferry, at Radford, on New River, it passed the divide between the Atlantic waters and those of the Ohio River. Crossing New River at Ingles' Ferry it passed southwest down through the present towns of Pulaski, Max Meadows, Wyethville, Marion and Abingdon, (Washington Court House,) touching North Carolina on the head of Reedy Creek, to the Block

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House. Ingles' Ferry at Radford, still in the hands of the Ingles' family, (1920), and Fort Chiswell were the important early stations on the road, and, after the Block House, the most important pioneer stations between the East and Kentucky. It is a matter of interest, showing how well the road from Philadelphia to the Block House followed the best topographical lines, that the present Blue Book Automobile Routes, which, joined together, make the best road from

Long Island (on left) and the Holston in flood. Kingsport at mouth of Reedy Creek in distance at right

Philadelphia to Bristol, Tenn., follow for almost their entire length this old pioneer road.

The other road, from Richmond, ran almost directly west through Chesterfield, Powahatan, Cumberland, Buckingham, Appomattox, Campbell and Bedford Counties, crossing the Blue Ridge at Blue Ridge Gap into Bottecourt County, and meeting the road from the Shenandoah Valley at Big Flat Lick, (Roanoke,) or about where Salem now stands. Fort Chiswell was about seventy-five miles further on.

The road from North Carolina came up from the Yadkin Valley through Salisbury, Huntsville, Yadkinville, and Wilkesboro. It crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains between Elkville and Boone and crossed Stone Mountains, in the present Tennessee, at Zionville,

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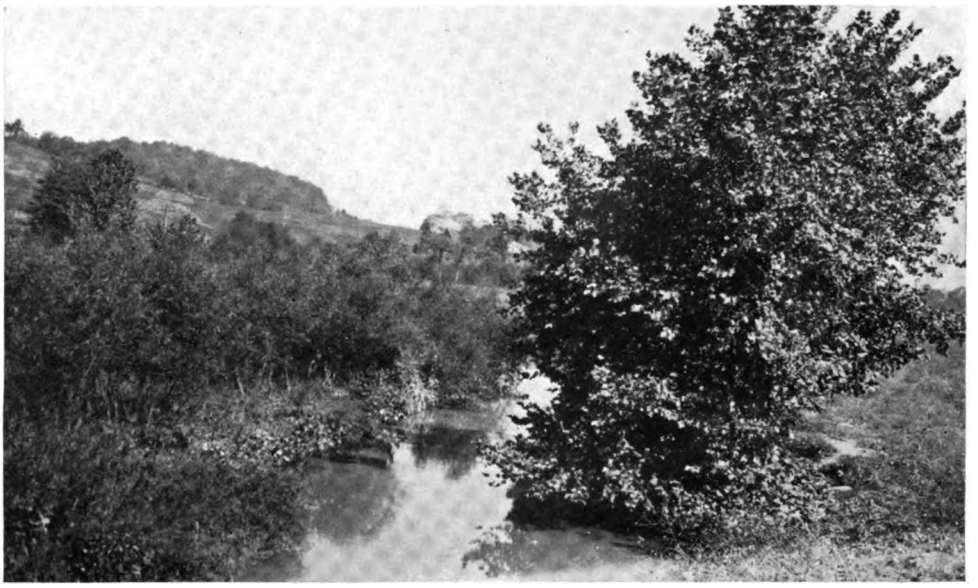

Reedy Creek near mouth at Kingsport, Tenn.

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N. C.[1] Thence it went across the northeast corner of the present state of Tennessee by Watauga to Long Island in the South Fork of the Holston, and Fort Patrick Henry, (Kingsport), at the junction of the North and South Forks of the Holston, and thence on to the Block House.

The road from the Block House to Harrodsburg or Boonesborough was about 225 miles long. Leaving the Block House it first made its way somewhat north of west for 35 miles over Clinch and Powell Mountains, to Powell Valley, then it bore down upon Cumberland Gap almost directly west, through Powell Valley for 45 miles. Then it climbed Cumberland Gap, and, 15 miles further, almost directly north, it found the gap in Pine Mountain and the ford of the Cumberland at Pineville. From that point it threaded its way for 100 miles in a northwest course through the foothills of the Cumberland Mountains in Eastern Kentucky and emerged upon the plateau of Central Kentucky at Crab Orchard and on the Boonesborough trace at Berea.

What were the determining features in the location of this road and how in the maze of streams and forests and mountains were these features found and utilized? The essential key to this route is Cumberland Gap, for the Cumberland Mountains running northeast and southwest between Virginia and Kentucky and across Eastern Tennessee offer an impassable barrier to the west for a hundred miles except at Cumberland Gap. Of no less importance is the gap in Pine Mountain at Pineville. With these two gaps found no great barriers exist to prevent the traveler from getting into Kentucky. But without the gap in Pine Mountain, Cumberland Gap would simply have allowed the explorer to reach the interminable series of mountain ranges through which Walker floundered to no purpose in 1750. The next point of critical importance, after Cumberland Gap and

[1] Magazine Daughters of the American Revolution, April 1914, page 221, Daniel Boone Trail.

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the gap in Pine Mountain, is Moccasin Gap in the Clinch Mountains, the only gap through these mountains allowing access to the Clinch Valley. Little if any less important was the way up Stock Creek over Purchase Ridge and over Powell Mountain at Kane's Gap. With these gaps found, the location of the road is a matter of following topographical lines of least resistance. These lines are rough and forbidding, but they did not offer impossible resistance to the passage of the pioneer traveler.

The first explorers found many of these paths already laid out. The buffalo had doubtless trodden them first. After him the Indian had gotten to use them, and had made some of them his highways. Cumberland Gap was certainly one of the Indian's chief passes. The pioneer explorers found their highway well defined across it. This road, known as the Warriors Path, had come down through Ohio from Sandusky, crossed the Ohio River at the mouth of the Scioto, and had gone almost south by Blue Lick through the mountains of Eastern Kentucky, until it struck the Cumberland River at Pineville; it had gone south up Yellow Creek to Cumberland Gap and had continued south from Cumberland Gap to its destination in the country of the Cherokees on the Tennessee. All along the route the pioneer explorer found buffalo paths, or Indian trails, which furnished him a path.

But the explorer had first to locate these paths, and then had to connect them up. Sitting with the topographical maps of this country before one, in which every detail of the surface has been carefully surveyed, and recorded, it seems an easy matter to lay out this trail. But when one undertakes actually to follow its course over its two hundred and twenty miles' length, through the innumerable gaps by which it made its way through the mountains, across the shallows in the many streams where it found fords, over the hills where it left the streams for a shorter way,—when one follows it throughout its course from the Block House to Boonesborough and Crab Orchard, and remembers that the pioneers found this only

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Moccasin Gap

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Kane's Gap

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practicable entrance to Kentucky from the Southwest, he cannot fail to be impressed with the topographical instinct and engineering intelligence of the first travelers. Speed says justly of Boone's judgment in laying off the road to Boonesborough: "It required a mind of far more than ordinary calibre to locate through more than two hundred miles of mountain wilderness a way of travel, which, for one hundred years, has remained practically unchanged, and upon which the state has stamped its approval by the expenditure of vast sums of money appropriated for its improvement."

The topographical intelligence used in the location of the original road to Kentucky is illustrated even better by the way in which the present railroads follow its course. Between the headwaters of the Holston and Central Kentucky they have found no other route. If one takes a through car from Bristol, Tenn., to Louisville, Ky., he follows for nearly the entire distance between Moccasin Gap and Standford, Ky., the course of the Wilderness Road; and if, at Rock Castle River, he changes to a Cincinnati train he follows Boone's Path to Boonesborough. The only place where the railroad diverges widely from the Wilderness Road is in the upper part of Powell Valley. Leaving the Wilderness Road at Duffield the railroad goes north to Big Stone Gap, and then goes southwest, and meets the Wilderness Road again 25 miles from Cumberland Gap. In doing this the railroad gets an easy pass over Powell Mountain and goes around Wallen Ridge, but at the expense of about thirty additional miles. The pioneer made no such concession to steep mountain grades. The trend of his road is directly west from Duffield, along the short line to Cumberland Gap. This tendency of the pioneer traveler to take the short course wherever practicable is shown in many places along the route where the length of the old road is shorter between stations than that of the railroad. The proposed automobile route from Louisville to Bristol, Tenn., through Cumberland Gap follows the old road even more closely.

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The General Features of the Road

The road throughout its whole length was tedious and difficult. Except for 40 miles down Powell Valley through a hilly but not mountainous country, its entire course was hard going through mountainous districts. Henderson's journal indicates that for the first 60 miles of its course there was some sort of a wagon road, but

Wilderness Road. At the start up east side of Cumberland Gap

through Cumberland Gap and the mountains of Kentucky it was simply a bridle path. The road had been in use twenty years before it was made a wagon road, following an act of the Kentucky legislature, in 1795. Before that time the 100,000 immigrants to Kentucky over the road had traveled most of its two hundred miles on foot or on horseback; and the best carrier of freight that could traverse the road was the horse with the pack saddle. Its entire length was through a country where the rock is on, or near, the surface, and it is always rough and stony. As one sees, for example, the boulders

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Wilderness Road to Kane's Gap on Powell Mountain

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that are strewn along the road that succeeded the bridle path over Cumberland Gap, he wonders how a wheeled vehicle ever negotiated it. The worst sections of the road were bridle paths over which a horse could make his way with difficulty.

Speed and Hulburt say that the pioneer in locating his roads avoided the water courses. This is not true of the Wilderness Road. The pioneer traveler was not afraid of hills, and did cut across them to save distance, but for nearly its whole length the Wilderness Road followed the streams. It went up Moccasin Creek, down Troublesome Creek, up Clinch River, up Stock Creek, down Wallen Creek down Station Creek, down Yellow Creek, along the Cumberland River. And when it left the water-courses and took to the mountains, it went up the mountains and down them along streams that made the grades easier. The traveler over the road, therefore, had constantly to meet the obstacles offered by streams, boggy lands, drift wood and fallen timber.

Between the Block House and Crab Orchard the road crossed five rivers of considerable size: The North Fork of the Holston, The Clinch, Powell River, The Cumberland, and Rock Castle River. Between these it crossed creeks innumerable, many of them, like Stock Creek, the North Fork of the Clinch, Indian Creek, Yellow Creek, Big Clear Creek, Richland Creek, Laurel River, Little Rock Castle River and the head of Dix River, streams of considerable size. Some of the pioneer journals testify to the difficulties of these creeks. They were troublesome at their best; in times of high water they made impassable obstacles. The Clinch and the Cumberland are the largest streams which it forded. These were only fordable when the water was not high. The fords of the rivers were points of great importance, and they were selected with great care. Always they were across shallows in the rivers made either by bars or by ledges of rock. There is a good deal of similarity in the way the road took most of these fords. It approached over the most eligible ground to the

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river's bank, and then usually went up or down the river for a short distance—in some cases as much as 400 or 500 yards—until it reached the shallow place. There it crossed, and usually returned on the other bank near to the point opposite where the road first met the river. There is such a hair pin curve in the road at the ford of the Holston, of Powell River, of the Cumberland, and of the Rock Castle.

Travel over the road was hard of course. There is much testimony to this fact. And it is almost impossible for us to understand how the appurtenances of a well developed civilization could have been carried chiefly over this road to the 200,000 people in Kentucky before 1800. One can realize how trying the journey was to the women and children. But it must be said that the journals of the pioneer travelers over it waste little time in lamentation. They mention their difficulties, and their accidents, but these are chiefly the loss of a dog, or a pack in crossing a stream, or the lack of bread, and similar things. The road itself they simply took as a matter of course, with little to say about its difficulties. In Brown's journal, for example, which is the most detailed and thoughtful account of the road, not a complaint of it is given. In Calk's picturesque record there are difficulties innumerable, but no complaints of them. Some parts of the road are spoken of as rough, but in no place is there a suggestion given that their passage was a particular hardship. That is not, of course, evidence in favor of the character of the road; it is, rather, evidence of the sturdy qualities of the men who traveled it.

The great difficulty of the journey was the danger of Indians. As late as 1790 this was a menace. The travelers protected themselves by waiting at the Block House, or Crab Orchard, until parties of sufficient strength could be collected to defend themselves against attack by wandering parties of Indians. They counted the strength of these parties by the number of guns in them. Thus Brown mentions that his party set out from the Block House with 12 men and

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The Wilderness Road approaching the old Ford along the bank of North Fork of Holston. River in left of picture

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10 guns. Speed has published many advertisements from the Kentucky Gazette that parties would start from Crab Orchard to go through the wilderness on definite dates, and some of these advertisements exhorted the men to come armed. They evidently did not set much store on their traveling companions who were without guns.

It is interesting to consider how rapidly the early pioneer travelers used to cover this route on foot. In 1774, before the Wilderness Road was marked out, Boone and Michael Stoner went from the Clinch to the Falls of the Ohio and back, (about 700 miles,) on foot in sixty-two days. Boone's party in 1775 made the 200 miles from the Block House to the site of Fort Estill in 15 days. William Brown records that it took him 7 days to reach the Head of Dix River from the Block House, (200 miles,) in 1782. The most marvelous performance recorded is that of Logan, who, in 1777, when his station was getting out of ammunition and was besieged by Indians, made the round-trip to the Holston in 10 days, most of the way not using the trail in order to avoid Indians, and bringing ammunition back with him.

But with all of the difficulties and hardships of the road, travel over it had its compensations to the vigorous or youthful pioneer. He had to overcome stones and mud and mountains, but he was in the wilds, untrammeled by the restrictions of occupied lands. He had no expenses; for besides salt, and, if he was lucky, bacon and flour, he lived upon the country. Game was abundant. It was a capital necessity with him and furnished his main supply of food. He was buoyed up by the spirit of adventure; he was going over a wild road to a new country. The scenery, to which there is evidence he was not insensitive, had many attractions. It was all mountainous. Very often the traveler was shut in by the mountain sides; but in many places, as going over Powell Mountain, Wallen Ridge, and Cumberland Gap he had glorious views from mountain heights of deep, wide valleys. In his long march down Powell Valley he was in

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the open country, with the fine rugged range of Cumberland Mountain on his west. Through most of his journey the mountains were softened by the bluish haze that usually envelopes these mountains. I have seen no lovelier pictures than some moonlight scenes through the haze in Powell Valley and on the upper Cumberland.

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DETAIL MAPS
OF
THE WILDERNESS ROAD

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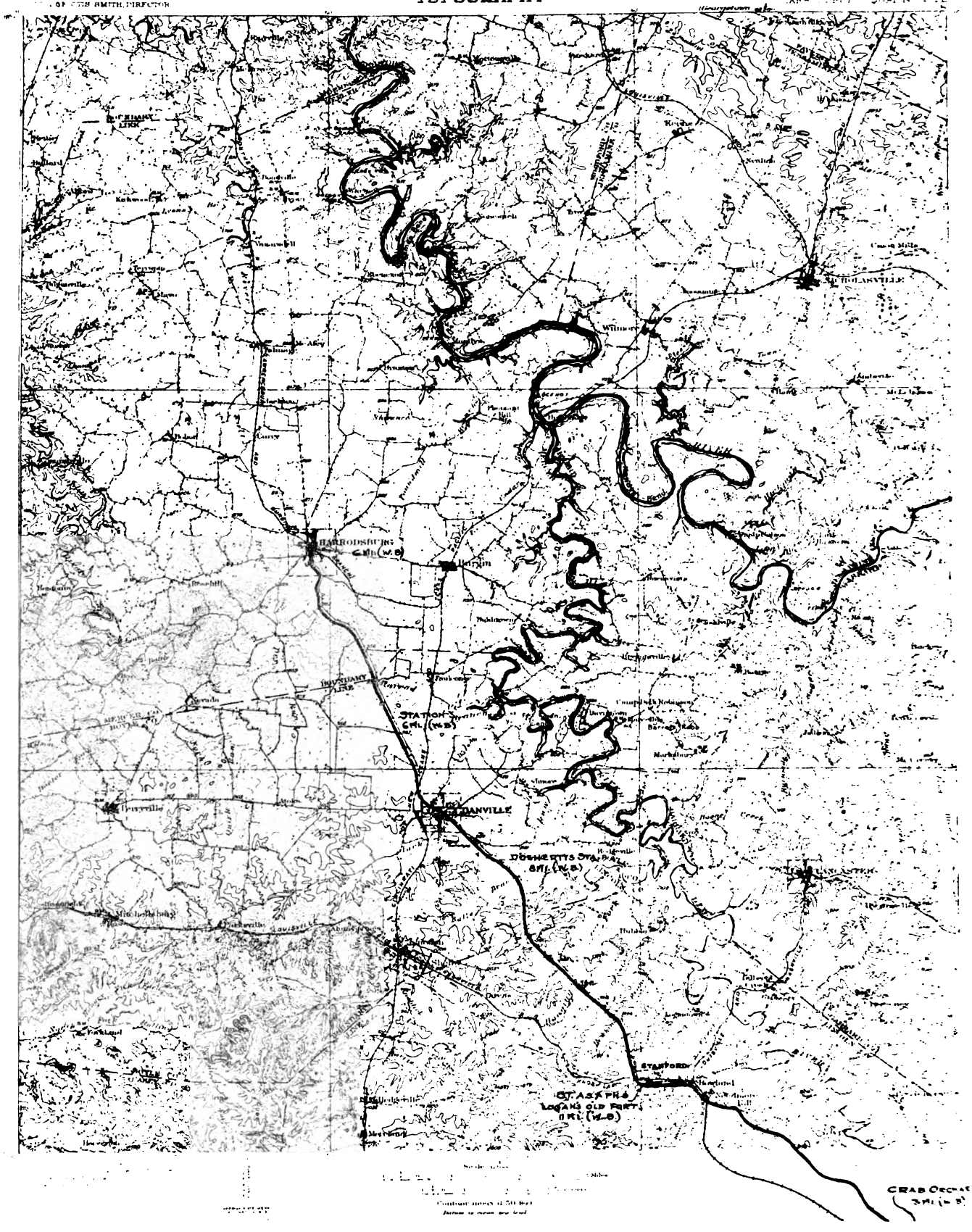

Harrodsburg to Crab Orchard

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Boonesborough to Boone's Gap

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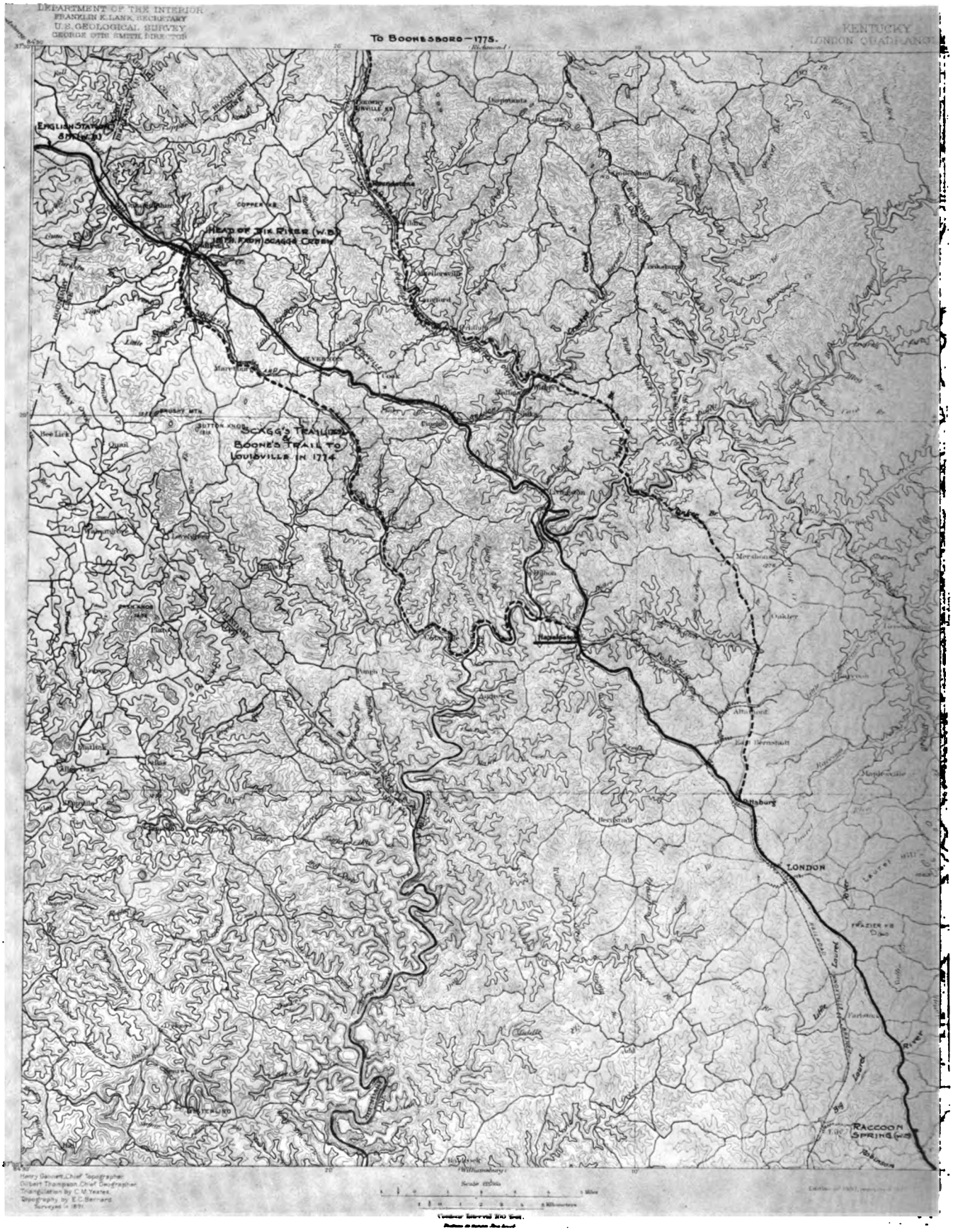

Crab Orchard and Boone's Gap to Raccoon Spring

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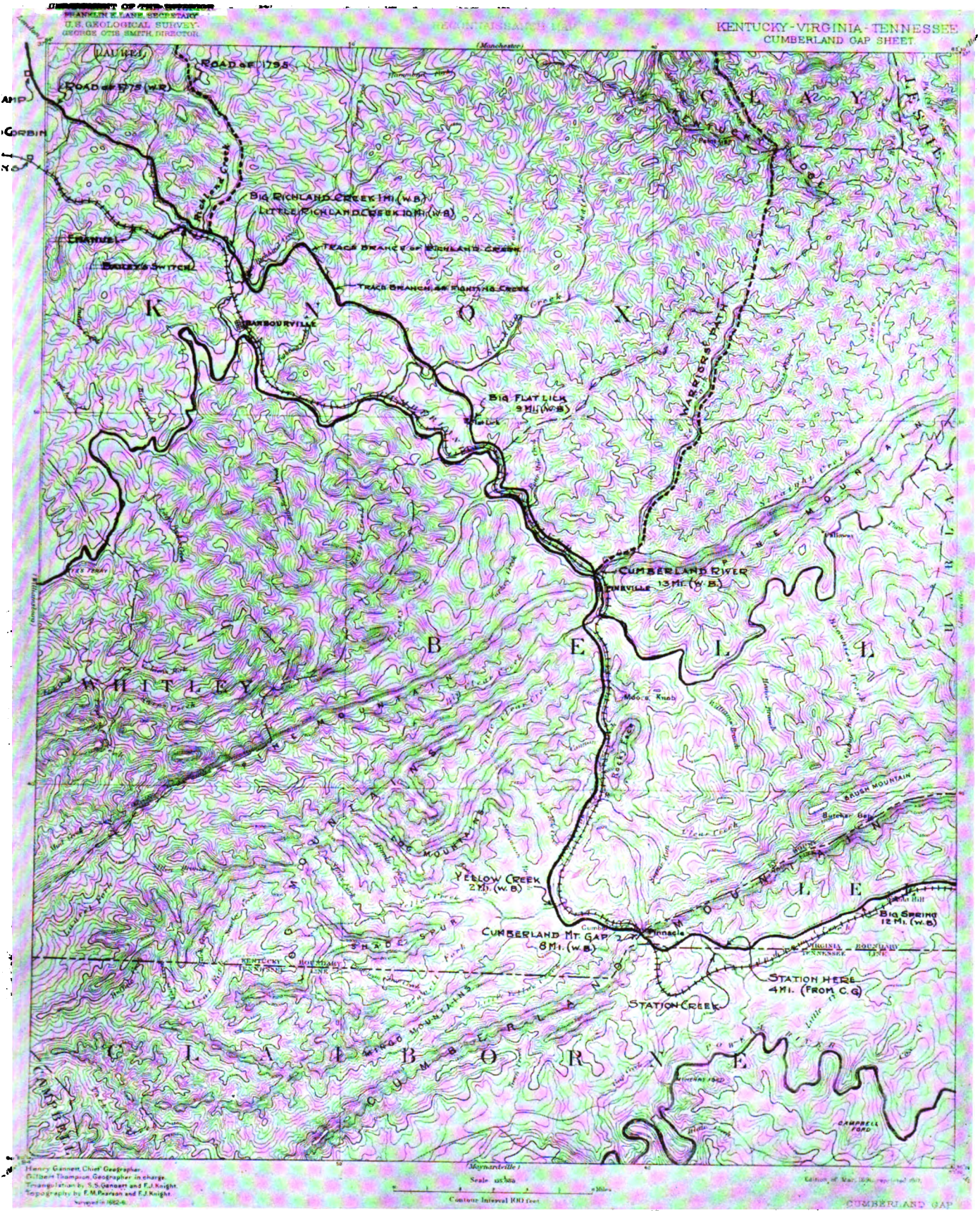

Raccoon Spring, Kentucky, to Big Spring, Virginia

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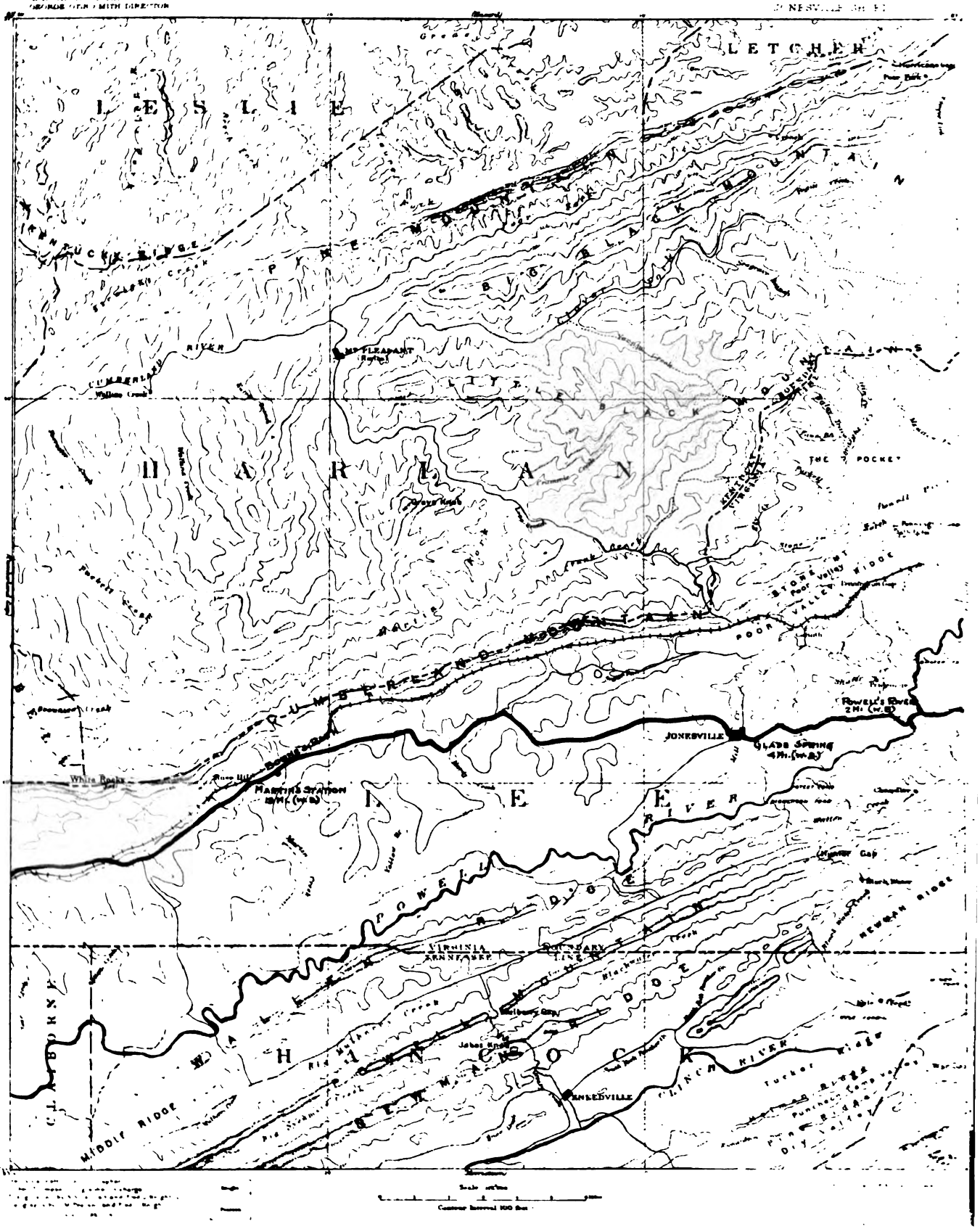

Big Spring to Powell River

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Powell River to Block House

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Chapter V

The Detailed Location of the Road from the Blockhouse to Cumberland Gap

THE Wilderness Road[1] has a very considerable literature. James Lane Allen has idealized it in his Blue Grass Region of Kentucky. At least three books have been written upon it. The solid contribution to its history is "The Wilderness Road," by Thomas Speed, published by the Filson Club of Kentucky. Hulburt in his "Historic Highways" has devoted a volume to "Boone's Wilderness Road"; and Addington Bruce, in his "Daniel Boone and the Wilderness Road," has given us another work in which the old road is the central topic. The road also has the distinction of having its course indicated at numerous points by tablets which were erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution of North Carolina, Virginia and Kentucky to mark Boone's trail from the Yadkin to Boonesborough. No one has, however, recorded its location accurately in the literature. Speed does not undertake to give the location of the road beyond indicating its general course. He seems to have in mind the lack of knowledge of its location when he says: "But the direction, character, and features of the roads are but little understood." His map of the road is a mere outline and misplaces the road between the Block House and Cumberland Gap. Hulburt does not locate the road with any more detail than does Speed, and he does not venture a map of it. Bruce, who has made a very scholarly

[1] Some confusion arises in the use of the term "Wilderness Road" to designate the road from Virginia to Kentucky, for the reason that in some localities the course of the road has been changed and distinction is made between the Wilderness Road and the Wilderness Trail. For example: Northwest of Barbourville, Ky., the trail

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study of the beginning of Kentucky, and of the part that Daniel Boone played in it, gives a valuable map of the early west, in which he actually locates the Wilderness Road as far as Cumberland Gap in the wrong state, placing it in Tennessee. It is well within the facts, therefore, to say, paraphrasing Speed, that its direction and features are little known.

This is not true for the most part, however, of the local knowledge of the road in the communities through which it passed. In these the tradition of the road is firmly established, and by persistence one can always find intelligent persons in the various localities, to whom the local knowledge of the road has been handed down by oral communication, or who have interested themselves in accurately determining its location through court records or through old documents that have been preserved in the community.

In early days the road was a landmark: It was "Boone's Path," "the Kentucky Path," "the Kentucky Trace," "the Kentucky Road," "the Road to Caintuck," "the Great Road," "the Great Western Road," (R. M. Addington). In Kentucky it was the "Wilderness Road," "The Road through the Great Wilderness." It was used as an established line in surveys, many of which are preserved in deeds of record or in private survey books. Through this various sort of information one can establish with practical certainty, (I am inclined to say certainty,) the actual location of most of the road. For example: From the literature on the subject I supposed

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of 1775 followed one course, and the road provided for by the Kentucky Legislature, which was opened in 1795, followed another. In this district the road of 1775 is called the Wilderness Trail and the road of 1795 the Wilderness Road. Then, later, in this locality, both of these roads gave way, as the main traveled road between Barbourville and London, to another road laid off in 1850; and now this road as the main traveled road between these points, has been succeeded by a road still further south, which goes through Corbin. I have had in mind in locating the road the old road of 1775. This was the important pioneer road. By 1795 this road had begun to divide its importance with the Ohio River Route to Kentucky, and after 1800 rapidly lost importance.

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the Block House was at Kingsport, Tenn., at the junction of the North and South Forks of the Holston. When I visited that place I found that it was not at Kingsport, but, on inquiry among residents there, I found that its location was well known and that it was in Virginia about five miles northeast of Kingsport. The locations of most other landmarks were easily determined as soon as one could get in touch with the intelligent older natives of the communities in which these landmarks had stood. In many places the history of the road has been investigated by residents of districts through which it passed: Thus Prof. R. M. Addington, of Gate City, Va., has verified the location of the road by examination of court records of Lee and Scott Counties, Va., and as well as of records in the Draper Collection at the University of Wisconsin. The exact location of the old ford of the Cumberland is not only preserved by tradition at Pineville, but its location, and the location of the road adjacent to the ford, were accurately established a few years ago by research, because these facts were needed in an important law suit involving title to land. Again, the location of the road in the neighborhood of Barbourville, Ky., has been verified by the study of court records and old survey books by Mr. Thos. D. Tinsley, of Barbourville, Ky. And so it is throughout the course of the road. It has often been difficult to find those who could give reliable information upon its location, but by persistence such persons could usually be found.

My first endeavor was the location of the landmarks mentioned in William Brown's journal. Until I went to Kingsport and found that the Block House was not there, but was five miles away, I was unable even approximately to trace the road from his journal. After the Block House was located in its correct position the approximate location of the road from the journal was easy. The definite locations of the less known landmarks, such as Little Flat Lick, Glade Spring, Martin's Station, the head of Dix River, and of points where the road crossed Powell Mountain, Powell River, Richland Creek,

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Laurel River, and Rock Castle River were gradually developed, usually as the result of correspondence or personal inquiry when I was on the ground. It was surprising how much inquiry was necessary before some of these landmarks could be located. With the landmarks of the road found, the location of the road between them can almost be inferred without the help of further information,

The abandoned Wilderness Road near Brodhead, Kentucky

although this is usually available; for the road invariably followed the shortest practicable course, and the old road is nearly always preserved in a present road. The tendency of the original road to follow the shortest practicable course is striking. A number of times in my investigation of the road my first understanding was that the road followed a course which turned out to be not the most direct one between known points on the road. Wherever this has been the case, fuller knowledge has shown that this original impression was wrong, and that the actual course of the road proved to be the more direct one. Where the old road is preserved in a present road

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this is usually the main traveled road, although occasionally another road has succeeded it as the thoroughfare. In many places the present road, while following the old route, has been re-located in recent years in building a modern highway. This is the case through Powell Valley for twenty miles north of Cumberland Gap, and from Cumberland Gap west for most of the way as far as Broadhead. Where this has been done the old road often parallels the present road, or crosses it back and forth, and in these places it remains as plain and gaunt a trail as when it was in use. Abandoned stretches of the old road of this sort gave me my most vivid impression of it.

In the maps reproduced herewith the road has been indicated in the topographical quadrangles of the United States Geographical Survey. These maps, drawn on a scale of ½ inch to the mile, and showing in minute detail the natural features of the terrain, enable one to give the location of the road and the topographical reasons for the location more vividly than can be done by any verbal description. Without them the accurate location of the road throughout its course would have been for me impossible. It is very lucky that they cover the entire territory, with one short exception, from the Block House to Harrodsburg, for beyond the Harrodsburg quadrangle Kentucky for the most part has not been mapped. The only part of the road which is not covered by a topographical map is a stretch of the road about five miles long, including Crab Orchard. Fortunately this part of the road has been recorded in a "Map of the Old Wilderness Road Through Lincoln County, Kentucky," published by the Lincoln County National Bank of Stanford, Ky., a copy of which, after a good deal of effort, the bank was able to obtain for me.

The Wilderness Road proper began at the Block House. The roads from the north and the south brought the traveler to this point. The Block House was the last station before Moccasin Gap, or Big Moccasin Gap, the gate to the Indian country, and about the same

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distance from the important western rendezvous of the Holston pioneers, Long Island, in the South Fork of the Holston River. It was, of course, for these reasons that the early travelers to Kentucky were used to gather at the Block House in order to form parties for the trip to Kentucky.

The Block House was established about 1777, perhaps even in 1775 when Boone's party went out, by Captain John Anderson[1] who lived in it from that time until his death. It was located in Carter's

[1]Capt. John Anderson built the block house and lived in it all his life thereafter. He was born in Augusta Co., Va., May 6th, 1750 and died Oct. 13th, 1817. He married Rebecca Maxwell Jan. 12th, 1775. (Manuscript Genealogy of the Anderson Family.)

The earliest mention of him, in this section seems to be as an inmate of Fort Blackmore, in 1774, the year of the Point Pleasant Campaign.

On Jan. 29th, 1777, he was appointed by the Washington County Court, as one of a commission of three to hire wagons to bring up the county's allowance of salt.

The Act of Legislature which created Washington County, also commissioned John Anderson Justice of the Peace. At the same term of Court, he was also appointed to take a list of the titheables "from Major Anthony Bledsoe's as long as there are settlers." (Sumner's Hist. Southwest Va.) This last mentioned circumstance would seem to justify the inference that he was living at the Block House about this time, (1777) for men who were appointed to take the titheables were seldom required to go very far from the neighborhood in which they lived, in the performance of such service. Major Bledsoe lived east of Kingsport. This section was then considered a part of Washington County, Va.

"On motion, John Anderson, Gilbert Christian, James Elliot, James Fulkerson were appointed Commissioners "to view a road from George Blackburn's by James Fulkerson's to the fork of the path leading to Kentucky and the mouth of Reedy Creek." (1777 Court Records of Washington Co., Va.) The "forks" were just west of Arcadia, I think, in the Block House neighborhood.

In 1780, Capt. John Anderson was named a Justice of the Peace for Sullivan Co., N. C. This circumstance adds to the probability that he was then living at the Block House because there was such an overlapping of claims as to the boundary line between Virginia and North Carolina, and the Block House was so near the strip in controversy that until the state boundary had been given somewhat definite location, John Anderson himself hardly knew to which state he owed allegiance.

In 1815 he was chosen high sheriff of Scott County which office he held at the time of his death. He seems to have built the Block House sometime between 1777 and 1780.

(Letter of R. M. Addington Dec. 6, 1920)

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House on exact site of Block House

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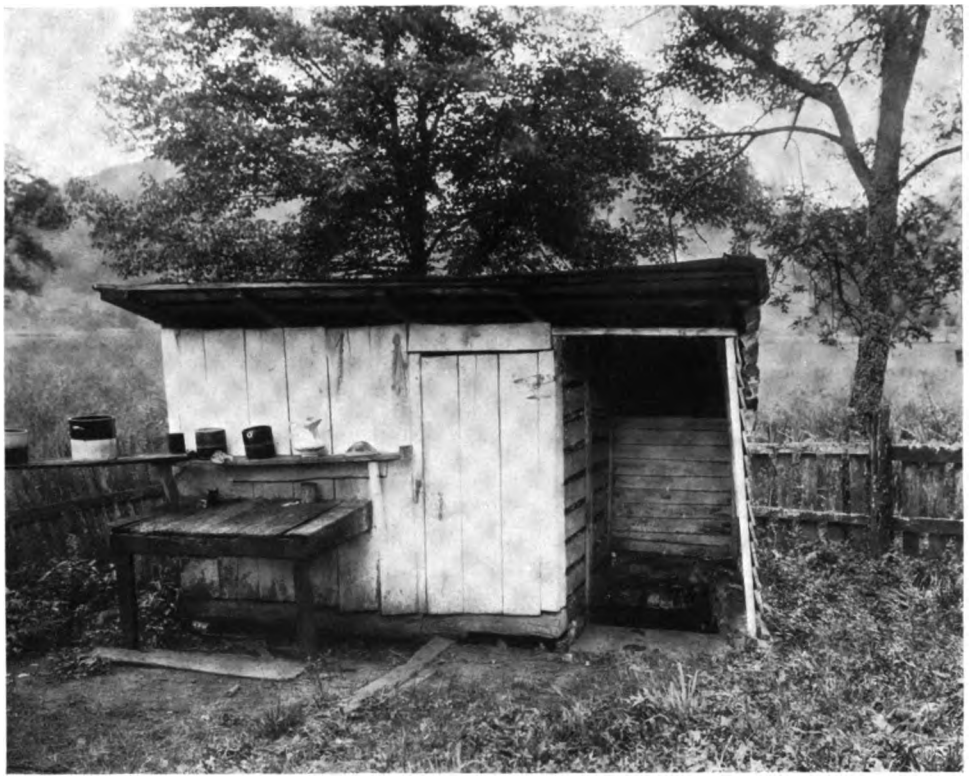

The old spring at the Block House

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Carter's Valley, looking east from the Block House. The old road to Virginia and Pennsylvania at right

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Valley at a point where the hills open out into a valley half a mile wide and a mile long. This little valley is today a meadow surrounded by wooded hills. The spot is a pleasant one in a rough country. The location of the fort itself was determined, as always at these stations, by the presence of a good spring. The fort stood upon a small hill above the spring and looked east up the valley.

Near Block House on old road from Long Island. Just back of this house is the Fork where the Wilderness Road to Kentucky left the Long Island Road

The old road to the Block House from Long Island, at the mouth of Reedy Creek, still exists. This is the road which Boone followed on his journey of 1775.

From the Block House the present road through Moccasin Gap, Gate City, Speer's Ferry, Clinchport, Duffield to Kane's Gap in Powell Mountain is in practically the exact location of the Wilderness Road. The first landmark of the old road after leaving the Block House was the ford of the North Fork of the Holston, two miles distant. The old ford is about 300 yards up the river from the present bridge, and the old road, approaching the ford up the south

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bank of the river and going down the north bank, still exists. Four miles beyond this is Moccasin Gap which furnished the only passway through the Clinch Mountains from the settlements on the Holston to the Clinch Valley. It is traversed by Big Moccasin Creek, and is a perfect gap, which allows passage without grades through this

A typical gap on Wilderness Road. In Carter's Valley near Block House

otherwise difficult mountain range. One mile beyond Moccasin Gap stood Fariss' Station in the outskirts of the present town of Gate City, Va. On the Court House there is one of the tablets of the Daughters of the American Revolution marking the Boone Path.

From Moccasin Gap to the Clinch River the road found an almost perfectly straight westerly course between the Clinch Mountains and Moccasin Ridge, up the valley of Little Moccasin Creek, and down the valley of Troublesome Creek. It crossed by a very easy grade the watershed between the Holston and the Clinch which is situated at the point now called Big Cut. The valley of Moccasin and Troublesome Creeks for the entire distance is a narrow one. At

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some places it spreads out into a pleasant valley, but particularly going down Troublesome Creek it is for the most part so narrow that it hardly furnishes location for the state roads and the two railroads which traverse it. The last half-mile of the present road going west, before reaching the Clinch is not located on the old road. For this half mile Troublesome Creek forms a gorge so narrow that the only way for the pioneer to have traversed it would have been to follow the creek bed, and, as one goes over the road which has been built here now, he can well realize what a complete obstacle to its use by the pioneer as a road the pools, the rocks and ledges, the fallen trees, and the driftwood in it would have made. The old road left the present road at Speer's Ferry railroad station, went up over the hill and came down a ravine to the Clinch River a couple of hundred yards below the present Speer's Ferry. The old ford across the Clinch is located a few yards below a present mill dam, which is 200 yards downstream from the ferry across the river. The old ford was over a shoal in the river formed by an exposed ledge of rock, and, although the Clinch is a considerable stream, was not a deep ford in ordinary stages of water. The ford of the Clinch was, of course, a landmark on the road.

The next landmark was the ford of Stock Creek, two miles north of the ford of the Clinch, at the present village of Clinchport, and a few hundred yards above the point where the creek empties into the Clinch. Here is another marker of the Boone Trail on the village school house, but it is not situated on the Wilderness Road. To this point from Speer's Ferry the road followed closely along the bank of the river through the deep gorge which the Clinch has cut here. This road from the Block House to the ford of Stock Creek is the only practicable way in this territory between the Holston and the Clinch. Although it goes through Clinch Mountain and its foot hills, it is without steep grades. Its importance is shown by the fact that two railroads from the west of these mountains come together at

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Clinchport, parallel each other and the old road from this point to Moccasin Gap, and again diverge.

At the ford of Stock Creek the hard mountain travel begins, and continues until Powell Valley is reached on the headwaters of Station Creek. The road followed up Stock Creek in a tortuous, steep, and difficult climb over the north end of Purchase or Stock Creek Ridge. In its course up Stock Creek it went around the mountain through which Stock Creek has cut the famous Natural Tunnel. It is a curious fact that although the road goes within half a mile of the Natural Tunnel no mention is made of this freak in any of the pioneer journals. This omission has been explained to me by local residents on the ground that the Natural Tunnel was not a noteworthy object until it was enlarged in about 1890 by the South Atlantic & Ohio R. R. for use as a railroad tunnel, but in Henry Howe's Historical Collections of Virginia published in 1845 there is an illustration of the Natural Tunnel and a description of it as a very remarkable natural object, from the Monthly Journal of Geology of February, 1832. A more probable explanation, therefore, is that the pioneer found it necessary to go around the mountain rather than through the tunnel, and the few travelers who kept journals of their trips over the road were too much occupied with the affairs of the road to pay attention to objects which did not directly concern them.

When the road had gotten up Stock Creek to the present point of Horton's Summit it had surmounted Purchase Ridge which ends with the gorge of Stock Creek. In going around Purchase Ridge in this way the road had a difficult climb, but it had avoided the harder climb which is involved in going over Purchase Ridge. I have crossed directly over Purchase Ridge, to Pattonville, and I can testify to the fact that it is a difficult and steep climb.

The next landmark on the road was Little Flat Lick which was located a few hundred yards east of the present Duffield Station. These licks were always points of great importance to the pioneer

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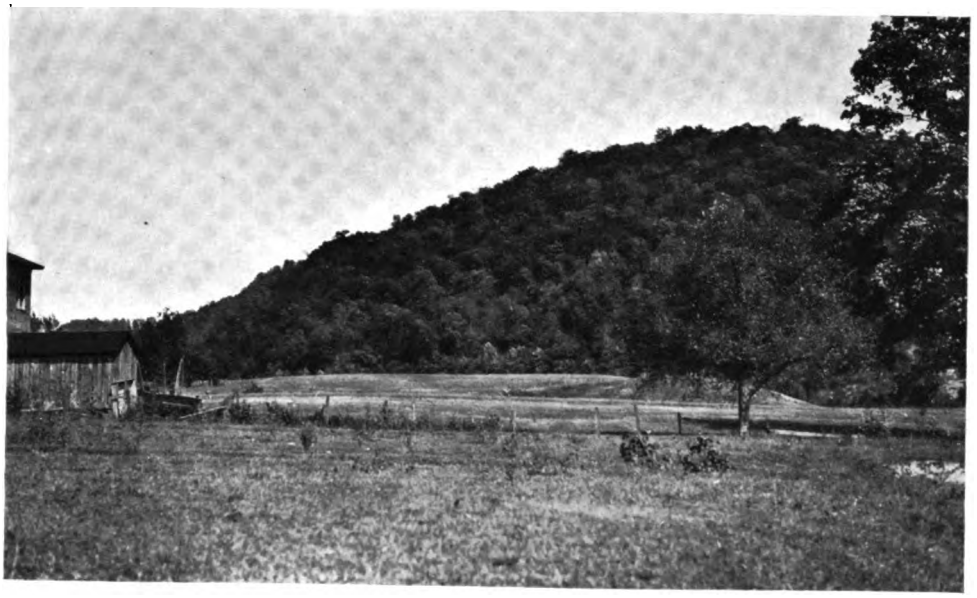

Little Flat Lick

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travelers: First, because the game, which frequented them, made paths along the natural routes to the licks, of which the pioneers availed themselves; and, second, because they afforded the pioneers the easiest opportunities for getting the game which they relied upon for food on their journeys. The licks on the road were all important landmarks to the pioneers. There was the Big Lick or the Great Lick on the road between the Blue Ridge and the Alleghenys at Roanoke, Va.; Little Flat Lick was here at Duffield, and in Kentucky there was Flat Lick near the railroad station at present called Flat Lick on the road midway between Pineville and Barbourville. The location of Boonesborough itself was in part determined by the existence in the hollow there of a mineral spring which made one of these licks. These licks, of so much interest to the pioneer traveler, have no indication now of their former importance. Little Flat Lick is now a commonplace marshy field where there is a spring. Flat Lick, Ky., is an altogether inconspicuous little valley situated in a bowl between the hills, looking out toward the Cumberland River. And the lick at Boonesborough is in a narrow valley covered by sycamore trees. There is nothing about these licks, since the wild animals have gone, that distinguishes them in the slightest degree from innumerable spots. It is only by remembering that they were once the gathering place of the buffalo and the deer, and that the paths of these animals converged on them from all directions, that one understands how they were once important landmarks.

The pioneers had a short cut across Purchase Ridge from Stock Creek to Little Flat Lick, called the Devil's Race Path. It was so steep and rough that it was only suitable for the hardiest foot travelers, but it saved two miles in distance. At Duffield is a marker of the road.

One mile beyond Little Flat Lick, and half a mile beyond Duffield, was the next pioneer landmark on the road, the ford of the North Fork of the Clinch, here a small creek. Half a mile beyond

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this point began the steep climb over Powell Mountain, which the road crossed through Kane's Gap at an elevation of about 2,500 feet. The climb up to the gap was a hard steep climb of about four miles with a correspondingly sharp descent on the western side. There are the remains of a graded road through the Gap now, which is almost

On top of Powell Mountain

beyond use. Even with this once graded road, the way over the Gap is difficult. From the foot of Powell Mountain on the west the old road is represented by the present road down Wallen Creek to Stickleyville. A short distance from the foot of Powell Mountain, on its west side, was situated Scott's Station. Beyond the present Stickleyville the road passed over Wallen Ridge and reached Powell Valley on Station Creek. The climb over Wallen Ridge was long and steep; not quite so long or so high, but otherwise like that over Powell Mountain. Five miles down Station Creek Valley from Wallen Ridge was situated Valley Station.

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Powell Mountain Range from west, showing Kane's Gap

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Wilderness Road on Station Creek. Wallen Ridge in distance

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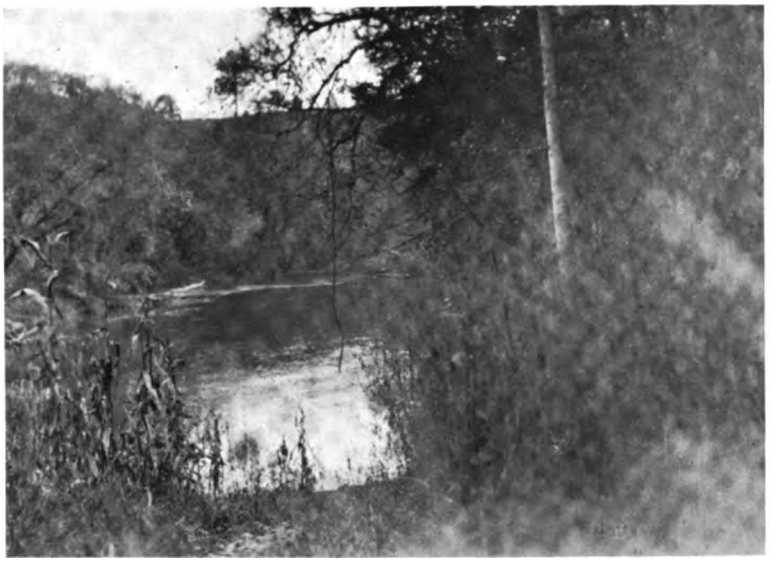
In its course from the Block House to Station Creek the old road had found its way across a continuous series of mountain ranges, all of which had a northeast and southwest trend, and whose practicable crossing was along this devious path. It had gone through Clinch Mountain; climbed around Purchase Ridge; and crossed Powell



Powell River

Mountain and Wallen Ridge. The name Troublesome Creek has been left as testimony of the difficulties of even the level stretches of this part of the road. From the ford of Stock Creek to the valley of Station Creek, there was one succession of hard climbs and descents.

When the traveler reached Valley Station he was in Powell Valley. Thence to Cumberland Gap the road goes over many hills, and through a country that is always rolling, but it has no more mountain ranges to cross and no great natural obstacles to overcome. From Station Creek the old road followed directly west to Jonesville along a direct but now little used road. Two miles beyond Valley Station and seven miles beyond Wallen Ridge the road crossed by

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one of its hair-pin fords Powell River. The next landmark beyond Powell River was Glade Spring at the present Jonesville, Va. On the retaining wall of the yard of the court house at Jonesville[1] is one of the Boone markers.

Wilderness Road in Powell Valley between Jonesville and Boone's Path

[1]Col. A. L. Pridemore, of Jonesville, Lee County, Va., under date of April 6th, 1889, writes to Dr. L. C. Draper, in part, as follows:

"As I wrote you, a long conversation with Col. Spears in which I put to him many pointed questions, has led me to doubt somewhat my former theory, that Boone's son was killed at the mouth of Wallens Creek. In the first place I was mistaken in saying that Cumberland Mountain could not be seen from the gorge in Wallen's Ridge near the village of Stickleyville; it can be seen plainly from near the top and on the sides but not from the gorge from about ⅓ the way down but the view is not striking and pronounced like from the mouth of the creek. But Col. Spear, says in the date of 1800, his father removed for the second time to Scott County when he was a young man, not over 14 or under 10 years of age, and remembers well the country at that time. He says his father was followed and sued for a debt; that or the following summer, and he would come with his father to this place, (Jonesville) to attend the trial, they then lived on the same farm where he now lives (on the bank of Copper Creek, a short distance above its mouth at Speers Ferry in Scott County, it was Lee then, and that they traveled the road called Boone's path, that they would go up Stock Creek, cross over to what is known as the

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From Jonesville to within a few miles of Cumberland Gap the old road is preserved practically in the present direct road between these points which is now a State road. From Boone's Path to

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Flat Lick, over Powell's mountain to the head of Wallens Creek, down it about 5 miles to where Stickleyville now is and then turn over the ridge, Wallens, by Rocky Station and on to Jonesville, and I find some old people about here who point out the street in this town (Jonesville) said to be Boone's road but by whom they do not know." (Draper Mss. 6C 27.)

I take it that Col. Spear's statement as here given in Pridemore's letter, is, in itself, pretty nearly conclusive evidence of the location of the Wilderness Road from Flat Lick to Jonesville. Col. Spear traveled over it in 1800, or 1801. He designates it as "Boone's Path." Of course, many of the people then living in this section knew the location of the "Path."

Col. Robert Spear, mentioned in the extract from Col. Pridemore's letter, lived to be more than 100 years old. He made an active canvass of this country, and was elected to the General Assembly of Virginia when he had passed his ninetieth year. Col. A. L. Pridemore was born, and reared in Scott County, but lived many years near Jonesville, Va. He represented the 9th Virginia District one term in Congress. The words enclosed in parentheses in the quotations above are mine.

The Kentucky Path began the ascent of Powell's Mountain not very far from Duffield, probably about ¾ of a mile west of the town. It zigzagged, no doubt, as roads usually do in making such ascents. And this zigzagging, no doubt, was changed occasionally by fallen timber or other obstructions. Its objective point, so far as Powell's mountain was concerned, was Kane's Gap. The surface of the mountain on the Duffield side was steep though not bluffy. I am told that a Mr. Bostic drove a wagon wherever he wanted to go on the mountainside, in gathering tanbark a few years ago. In descending the steeper places he had only to hitch a sapling to the rear of his wagon and let it trail on the ground behind. (I can hardly think of the pioneer wagoners as being less resourceful.) I am told, furthermore, by men who know both crossings, that, restoring "the forest primeval" to its probable condition in Boone's time, it would be more feasible for wagons to cross at Duffield than at Pattonsville because of the loose rock and the cliffs at the latter crossing. The descent of the mountain on the Wallens Creek side is less steep than on the Duffield side. There are no cliffs and very few stones. Pasture fields now extend very nearly to the top of the mountain. From the point where the road began the ascent of the mountain on this side to the point where it reached Wallens Creek on the Lee County side is nearly due west.

I once thought that Henderson's wagons *must* be sent across the mountain at Stickleyville in order to enable them to reach Martin's Cabin. I am not sure about it now. The more I investigate the matter, the more it appears to me that not only the foot and horseback travel crossed at Duffield, but, also such wagon travel as there was, prior to 1804, crossed there. There is some reason for thinking that the Pattonsville crossing was made use of in constructing a road to Big Moccasin Gap in 1804. This furnished rather more direct communication with the

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Cumberland Gap a modern graded road has been built which, for the most part, is in the location of the old road. Except where this modern road is built upon it, the old road usually is visible paralleling it. One mile beyond the point called Boone's Path, where there is only a small country store that was formerly a post office, and half a

In Powell Valley

mile east of the village of Rose Hill, the road crossed Martin's Creek. Martin's Station was located a mile south of this point.

Martin's Station was the important station on the road between the Block House and Crab Orchard. It was the station of Captain

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inhabitants of Lee who resided on this side of Powell's mountain. Lee County was organized in 1792. The road orders of the old Lee County Court, might, therefore, furnish some data on the Kentucky Path. It is my purpose to search these records some time in the future, but I do not know when. I am of the opinion, however, that whatever data the Lee Court records may hold, will tend only to confirm, not to change, the location which you have assigned to the road from Moccasin Gap to Jonesville.

Letter of Prof. R. M. Addington, Dec. 20, 1920

Compare also J. H. Duff's early map of Boone's route to Kentucky through this region. Draper Mss. 6C89.

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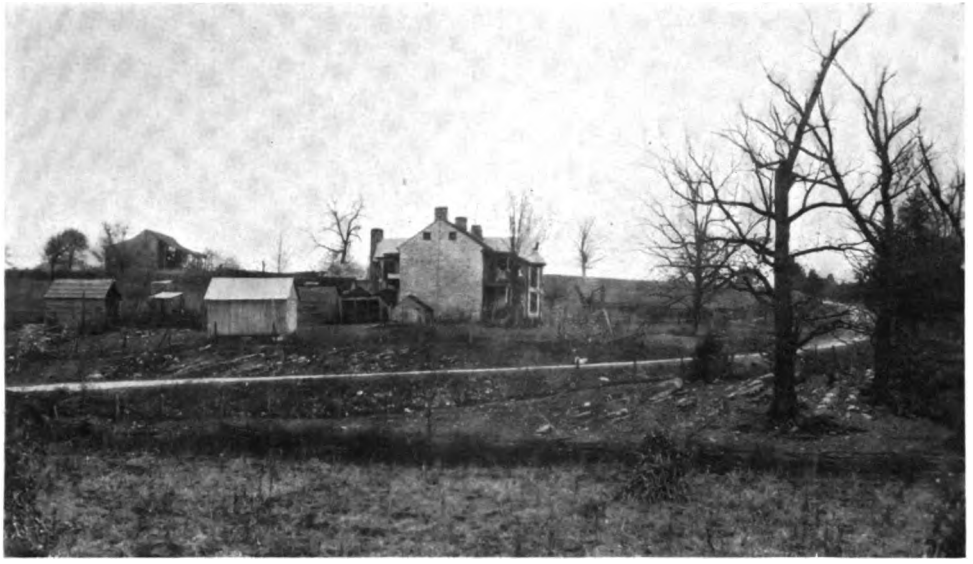
Joseph Martin, who was Virginia Agent for Indian Affairs, and the most influential person both with the Indians and with the scattered settlers in Powell Valley. Martin was living at this station when Boone and Henderson made their journeys in 1775, and the station is also recorded by Brown and by Filson in 1782 and by Speed in



Stone House of 1784, six or seven miles northeast of Cumberland Gap.
Probable site of "Big Spring"

1790, although about 1782 Captain Martin transferred his headquarters to Long Island in the South Fork of the Holston. The location of Martin at this point, almost half way between the Kentucky and Holston settlements, and within twenty miles of Cumberland Gap, was a very important matter for the early travelers. We find Henderson utilizing Martin as his agent on the road, and he was a sort of relay station between the eastern and western settlements.

Beyond Martin's Station the road passed into the valley of Indian Creek and followed down this valley almost to Cumberland

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Gap. Near one of the crossings of Indian Creek, about 12 miles from Cumberland Gap, is said to have occurred the Indian attack upon Boone's party, of October 1773 when his son James Boone and six other members of the party were killed, a disaster so great that the party was compelled to abandon the trip to Kentucky.[1]

Residence in Lower Powell Valley, on Wilderness Road

Twelve miles from Martin's Station and 6 miles from Cumberland Gap was "Big Spring." From this point to English's Station, three miles from Crab Orchard — 120 miles — there was not a station. Here the traveler had to traverse 120 miles of uninhabited wilderness.

From Boone's Path to Cumberland Gap down Powell Valley was the best stretch of the Wilderness Road. Here the traveler passed down a fertile wide rolling valley with the high rugged ridge of Cumberland Mountain close at hand. The mountain range dominates the scenery and, as William Brown vividly described it, "affords a wild romantic prospect."

[1]This location of the disaster to Boone's party in 1773 so near Cumberland Gap can hardly be correct. This point is nearly 60 miles by the trail from the Clinch River, and in the account of this occurrence it is said that members of the party went back to the Clinch for help and returned within a day. On Duff's map, Draper Mss. 6C89, at the point where he has Boone's route crossing Wallen Ridge, he has indicated this point as the site of this massacre. This seems to be a much more likely location for it.

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Chapter VI

The Detailed Location of the Road—(CONTINUED) *from Cumberland Gap to Crab Orchard and Boonesborough*

NEARING Cumberland Gap from the east the road started around the foot of Cumberland Mountain through the valley of Station Creek, a small branch of Indian Creek. It went up this valley through a deep ravine and passed from it over Poor Valley Ridge at Poor Valley Gap. Poor Valley Ridge is a ridge which parallels Cumberland Mountain for thirty or forty miles north from Cumberland Gap. From Poor Valley Gap the road passed along the base of Pinnacle Mountain in the valley of a branch of Gap Creek. It struck what is now Colwyn Street of Cumberland Gap Village and passed along this street to a point about fifty feet east of the present railroad station of Cumberland Gap. At this point, the road for the only time dips into Tennessee for a few hundred yards.

Just beyond the railroad station the road began the sharp climb of the Gap proper. The old road ascended the Gap on the north wall of the ravine. The earliest wagon road ascended by numerous turns back and forth until it got half-way up to the Gap, and then, by a very steep path along the wall of the ravine, it reached the Gap itself. Going down from the west side of the Gap the road followed the south wall of the ravine down a course of similar character to that on the east side of the Gap. The track of this old road is now well preserved, and can be followed on both the east side and the west side of the Gap. It was narrow, excessively steep in places, and so stony that one wonders how a wagon ever got over it. Before

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this road was built the trail for horses and men went up to the Gap by a shorter and steeper climb on the north wall of the ravine leading to the Gap. Approaching the Gap from the east the old foot trace is still visible in a path at present in use. I could find no trace of the old footpath on the west side of the Gap.

The Wilderness Road coming down Poor Valley into Cumberland Gap Village (Colwyn St.). Just before the Gap comes into view

Cumberland Gap itself is a magnificent mountain pass, worthy of its importance and its history. On the north side, Pinnacle Mountain rises about 900 feet above the Gap; the first 600 or 700 feet at an angle of about 60 degrees; the last 200 or 300 feet a vertical cliff of white limestone. The mountain rising on the south side of the Gap is neither so high nor so forbidding, but is still imposing. The vertical white limestone cliff several hundred feet in height, which makes the upper third of Pinnacle Mountain at the Gap, is exposed for many miles along the crest of Cumberland Mountain north of the Gap. It is this cliff, which one sees as he comes

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The Old Wilderness Trail at Cumberland Gap

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The Gap looking east. Old Trail comes up ravine just at right of Stone Marker at left center of picture

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down Indian Creek through Powell Valley, that makes the range so impressive and so forbidding.

To the traveler coming down Powell Valley by the old road the Gap is invisible. It was only after he has passed over Poor Valley Ridge and around the foot of Pinnacle Mountain and arrived at its

The first view of Cumberland Gap from the east, on the Wilderness Road, just after the road has rounded the foot of Pinnacle Mountain

very base that the Gap itself comes into view. The only point at which one gets a good distant view of the Gap from its east side is from the southeast where the present town of Cumberland Gap is located.

Coming down the west side of the mountain from Cumberland Gap the road passed towards the south around the base of the mountain behind the present old brewery at Middlesboro, Ky., and emerged into the valley of Big Yellow Creek at the point where the town of Middlesboro now stands. Here there is a valley five or six miles in diameter which forms a fine park, surrounded on all sides

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by mountains. Yellow Creek has cut the only easy exit from this valley.

When the first explorers passed through Cumberland Gap they found the path which the Indians had made. This was the Warriors Path, the Indian path from Lake Erie to the Tennessee. From the Gap it went west three miles along Yellow Creek and then straight

Cumberland River where the Wilderness Road meets it going west

north, still along Yellow Creek for most of the distance, to the Cumberland River at Pine Mountain Gap. Just beyond Pine Mountain Gap, at the mouth of Straight Creek, it left the Cumberland River, turning north up the valley of the left fork of Straight Creek and through the mountains to the mouth of the Scioto River on the Ohio. The Wilderness Road followed The Warriors Path until it forded the Cumberland beyond Pine Mountain Gap. It went down Yellow Creek to a point where Yellow Creek turns abruptly to the east to go around Rocky Face Mountain. The road left the creek here and saved several miles in its course to the Cumberland by climbing over a gap on the west side of Rocky Face. It continued then straight north until it reached the Cumberland River at the

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mouth of Big Clear Creek. A few hundred yards beyond the mouth of Big Clear Creek there is one of the Boone Trail markers. The road followed along the west side of the Cumberland River for a mile and passed through Pine Mountain at the gap at the present site of Pineville. This is a fine gorge, at its narrowest point so narrow that the mountains come down to the river on either side. It furnishes a perfect passway through this mountain range and the only one giving access to the west. The road forded the Cumberland at the north end of the present town of Pineville. It went along the south bank of the river until it found a gravel bar, and then turned back on itself at an angle of about 45 degrees, and went upstream across the river by a long, but shallow, ford to its north bank. This ford is situated about 200 yards below the present wagon bridge which crosses the river from the town of Pineville to the freight station.

The ford of the Cumberland and Cumberland Gap are, to my mind, the two most interesting landmarks on the Wilderness Road, and the stretch of the road between these two points is the most interesting part of the road. At the ford of the Cumberland the Warriors Path met the Wilderness Road. This path started in the Indian villages around Sandusky, on Lake Erie, passed through the Indian villages on the Scioto, crossed the Ohio at the mouth of the Scioto, and made its way almost directly south across the mountains of Eastern Kentucky. It came down Straight Creek, hugging the foot of Pine Mountain until it found the gap made by the Cumberland. This path was the highway of communication between the Indians north of the Ohio and those of the Tennessee country. No one can estimate how long the path which the Wilderness Road appropriated from Cumberland Gap to the ford of the Cumberland had been the Indians' highway. As one looks at the ford, which is probably little changed from its old character, he can, in his mind's eye, see these Indians picking their way in single file across the ford; then he can follow them, trailing along the river-bank through Pine

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Mountain Gap, going over the path along the west of Rocky Face, up the marshy valley of Yellow Creek and finally climbing over the great Gap itself to the headwaters of the Tennessee.

After them he can see the pioneers going over the same trail in the opposite direction: Up the mountain to Cumberland Gap they struggled, then down Yellow Creek, and then across the same old ford: Walker and his little party, then the early hunters and land-lookers—Finley, Scaggs, Stoner, Harrod, Boone, McAfee and the rest of them,—and after them the pioneer settlers, until 100,000 of them and more had gone by this path through the gateway to the land of Kentucky. It was a real thoroughfare.

This section of the road from the eastern slope of the Cumberland Mountain Range at Cumberland Gap to the west side of Pine Mountain and the Cumberland River is the gateway to Kentucky from the southeast. It and the section between Stock Creek and Valley Station, in Virginia, are the parts of the road which cross over the ranges of mountains that interfere with east and west travel. When the traveler had passed the ford of the Cumberland he had surmounted the great natural obstacles of his journey. An equally rough and hard part of his journey was left to him. He was not to get out of the foot hills of the Cumberland Mountains until he reached Crab Orchard or Berea, but he had crossed the mountain ranges which blocked his route, and he had crossed all of the difficult rivers in his course except the Rock Castle, and this was the least of his rivers.

Leaving the ford of the Cumberland the road followed along the north bank of the Cumberland River for 7 miles. It then turned north from the river, and 1 mile further reached Flat Lick. The old Flat Lick is one of the landmarks on the road. It was to the pioneer Big Flat Lick in distinction from Little Flat Lick at Duffield. The Lick is half a mile north from the present railroad station called Flat Lick. An old brick house stands there now as a reminder of

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The Old Ford of the Cumberland at Pineville

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the days when the road was a thoroughfare to the east. It is not a prepossessing spot.

The present railroad parallels the old road from Pineville to Flat Lick Station. From that point the railroad follows the Cumberland to Barbourville, while the Wilderness Road cut across the mountains and did not touch the present course of the railroad again until it reached London, 25 miles farther on. From Flat Lick the Wilderness Road followed the course of the present main road to Barbourville, but did not go through Barbourville. It followed the present road down Fighting Creek until it reached Trace Branch of Fighting Creek about 5 miles east of Barbourville. It turned up Trace Branch of Fighting Creek and went across to Trace Branch of Little Richland Creek, these two names, of course, commemorating the old trail.[1] It went down Little Richland Creek, one of the landmarks named by Brown, and crossed it near where it joined Richland Creek. One mile further west it crossed Richland Creek, another

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[1]It was the "Trace" that is referred to in Filson's and other journals; not the road. The road did not become a reality—that is, was not established, until after the passage of the Act of 1795. The "trace" was cut out in 1775, and was traveled by the immigrants until the establishment of the road. Your conclusion, therefore, with regard to the points on Robinson's creek and Laurel river, where the "trace" referred to in the journals crossed those streams, is correct—it was more southwest than the point at which the "road" crossed those streams."

However, Filson's journal is correct when it says "Down Richland Creek 8 miles," as to course, but not as to distance. This, however, refers to the "trace and not to the road." The "Trace" struck Richland Creek waters at the head of the "Trace branch of Little Richland creek" and traveled down that branch to its mouth, a distance of about four miles, and then down Little Richland Creek proper, about 1½ miles, crossing it about one half mile above its mouth, and then crossing Big Richland Creek about a mile above the mouth of Little Richland Creek.

The "trace" then kept on the west side of Big Richland Creek, and up the Middle Fork of Richland creek, and up the west prong of the Middle Fork, crossing on to Lynn Camp waters just west of the tunnel of the L. & N. R. R., south of Grays station, and then running to the east of Grays, east of Corbin, and then to London.

The "road" subsequently established, occupied no part of the "trace" as hereinabove located, but was northeast of the "trace."

(Letter of Mr. Thos. D. Tinsley, Feb. 5, 1921)

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one of the landmarks, and then went up the west side of Richland Creek for two miles to the mouth of the Middle Fork of Richland Creek. At this point it diverged from what is the present road to London and went up the Middle Fork of Richland Creek along a road which is still preserved and passed into the present Laurel County through Lynn Camp. Thence it followed the course of an old road which is still in use and crossed Robinson Creek, one of the road's landmarks, passed Raccoon Spring on Robinson Creek, crossed Laurel River and came into the present main traveled road to London, a couple of miles southeast of the present station of Farriston. From this point it followed approximately the present main road through London to the village of Pittsburgh. From the railroad station of Pittsburgh to Hazel Patch the Wilderness Road did not follow the course of the present main traveled road between these points, but took a much more direct course than the present road or the railroad along a road which still exists. Hazel Patch, preserved in the present station of Hazel Patch, was one of the chief landmarks of the road. From this point the old road did not follow down the valley of Hazel Patch, or Rock Castle Creek, as does the railroad, but again saved distance and went directly across towards Livingston over Wildcat Mountain. The road reached Rock Castle River just below the present station of Livingston. The old ford which crossed the Rock Castle is about 400 yards down the river from the present railroad bridge, and is still in use. At this ford, as at the ford of the North Fork of the Holston, and of Powell River, the road forms a sharp curve. It approaches near the river, then turns down stream until it finds a shallow where it crosses, then goes back for 400 or 500 yards along the other bank.

From Livingston the Wilderness Road is represented by the present main road through Mt. Vernon and Brodhead to Crab Orchard, thence to Stanford, Danville, and Harrodsburg. Its general route is that of the railroad between these points but it is

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shorter by a very considerable distance, for, as usual, it takes the shortest line, making almost no concession to the difficulties which the railroad finds it best to go around.

Between Hazel Patch and Brodhead there was another trail. This trail was found by Scaggs in 1769, and, according to the traditions of the district, was followed by Boone and John Finley on their first trip to the Falls of the Ohio in 1774. It seems to me also that the entries in Brown's journal indicate that it is probable that this trail was followed as late as 1782 when Brown made the journey recorded in his journal. This route left the other route of the Wilderness Road at Hazel Patch, followed down the valley of Hazel Patch or Rock Castle Creek, and crossed the river near the mouth of this creek; then it followed down the west bank of Rock Castle River to the mouth of Scaggs' Creek. Brown's journal gives Scaggs' Creek as five miles from the ford of the Rock Castle which would accord with this route, while Scaggs' Creek is nowhere touched by the other route, and is nowhere within five miles of the ford of the Rock Castle at Livingston. This route followed up Scaggs' Creek; then up the East Fork of Scaggs' Creek to its head; then paralleling at about a mile distant the other road it struck the head of a fork of Nigger Creek near the station of Maretburg. It followed down this creek paralleling the present railroad to the head of Dix River at Brodhead. This trail is represented by a road now in use, except for a few miles.

The site of the present village of Brodhead was a very important point to the pioneer traveler. Here Nigger Creek joins Boone's Fork to form Dix River. This point was in the journals of the pioneer traveler the "Head of Dick's River"—and Dix River flows into the Kentucky River. Between Mt. Vernon and Brodhead the route passed over the watershed between the Cumberland and the Kentucky, and at Brodhead the pioneer was on the streams which reached the country that was his goal. West of Brodhead

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the road followed along the west side of the valley of Dix River for 5 miles, and then, leaving the river, it went northwest to what the pioneers called "The Crab Orchard." Eight miles from Brodhead was situated English's Station, the most easterly outpost on the road to the Kentucky settlements; and at the Crab Orchard, which is 3 miles beyond English Station, and which is now represented by the village of Crab Orchard, it had reached practically the terminus of what the pioneer regarded as the Wilderness Road. Crab Orchard was the real western terminus of the road as the Block House was its real eastern terminus.

From the Block House to English's Station the road ran continuously through the mountains. At English's Station it emerged from the foothills upon the Blue Grass Plateau of Central Kentucky.

Traveling west from the Block House the pioneer had these stations: Fariss' Station, at Moccasin Gap; Scott's Fort, just beyond Powell Mountain; Valley Station just beyond Wallen Ridge; Martin's Station, 19 miles from Cumberland Gap. These were very small posts struggling in the wilderness, but they usually afforded meager supplies of flour, or bacon, or salt, and resting places for the traveler. Between Martin's Station and English Station and the Crab Orchard, the road traversed "the Great Wilderness." The traveler could rely upon no settlements for protection against the Indians, and his only chance for food and other supplies was what he could carry on his pack saddle or in his own pack, or take from the wilderness. No wheeled vehicle could pass over this path. It was a bridle path for 20 years after the settlements began, and for 3 years after Kentucky became a state. It was not only a bridle path presenting the difficulties of mountain travel, but for 15 years after the settlement of Kentucky it was beset by the constant danger of hostile Indian attacks. And along almost every foot of its course lay the opportunity for ambush.

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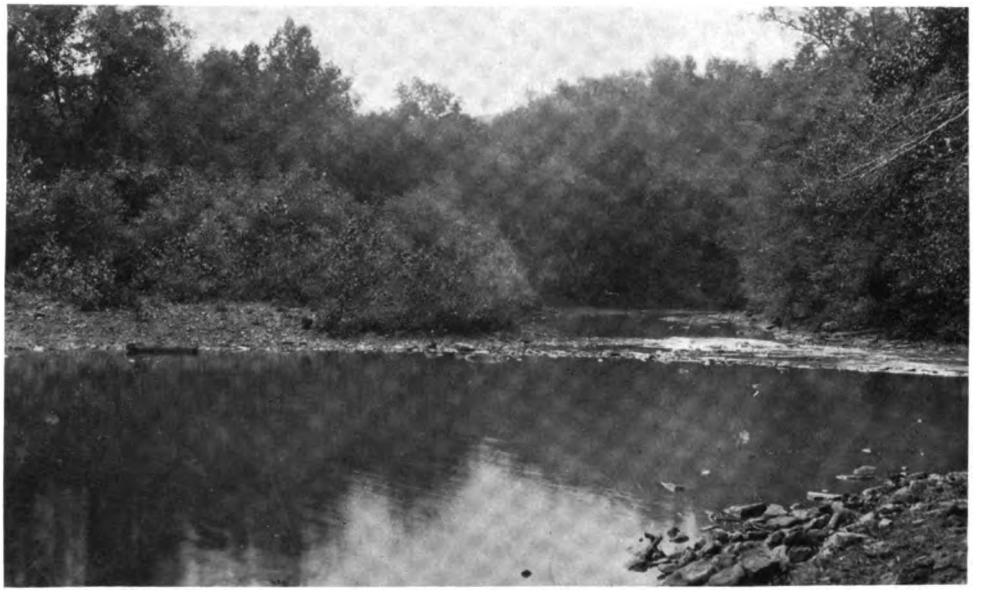
From Crab Orchard to Harrodsburg the road is represented to-day by the present pike going through Stanford and Danville. Eleven miles beyond Crab Orchard was Logan's Old Fort, or St. Asaph. This was established by Logan after he separated from Henderson near the Rock Castle in 1775 and was only a few weeks younger than Boonesborough. It stood at the site of the present waterworks pumping station at Stanford. The location of the road from the Rock Castle to Logan's Fort, which became the main road to Kentucky, was made by Logan. Fourteen miles further on was Harrod's Station, and 6 miles beyond this was Harrodsburg, the oldest settlement in Kentucky.

At Harrodsburg the early pioneer was in the heart of the Kentucky settlements, and although the road continued on through Bardstown and the Salt Works near Shephardsville to the Falls of the Ohio, Harrodsburg was the end of the trail. From the Block House to Harrodsburg, according to Brown's Estimate, the distance was 222 miles.



The Ford of the Rock Castle at mouth of Parker's Creek

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The Trail To Boonesborough

The trail to Boonesborough left the road to Crab Orchard somewhere near London or Altamont; then it struck north across the hills to the head of Parker's Creek. Thence it went down Parker's Creek to its mouth where it crossed Rock Castle River;

In Round Stone Valley

then about half a mile down Rock Castle River. Then leaving Rock Castle River it went north to Trace Branch of Crooked Creek; then down Trace Branch to Crooked Creek and down Crooked Creek to its mouth where the trail reached and crossed Roundstone Creek. It then went up the valley of Round Stone to Boone's Gap. It crossed through Boone's Gap and reached the head of Brushy Fork of Silver Creek which flows into the Kentucky River. At Boone's Gap it thus passed over the watershed between the Cumberland River and the Kentucky River.

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The trace from London to Boone's Gap was through a rough mountainous country. The valley of Round Stone is a narrow valley, sometimes narrowing to a ravine, sometimes widening out for a mile or more in width, with fertile bottom lands. Boone's Gap is a narrow pass through the Big Hill Range of the foot hills of the Cumberland Mountains, and is the best passage for many miles through this range. It is now used by the railroad. The climb to it from the valley of Round Stone is steep and rough, but not very long, and the same characteristics apply to the descent from the gap to the valley of Brushy Fork.

From Boone's Gap to Berea the road followed down Brushy Fork through a valley similar to that of Round Stone. Just south of Berea the road left the valley and went up over the plateau on which Berea is situated. Reaching the site of Berea the road passed to the west of the present square; then down from the ridge to a valley west of Berea and down this valley to the valley of Silver Creek proper. The old road which is now abandoned for the most part, persists as a well marked trace, where it is not in use as a road, for many miles north of Berea. From a point a mile north of Berea it is an abandoned road which runs north through the valley and comes again into the present highway at Terrill. From Terrill the old road is represented by the present highway to Fort Estill. There the present highway goes off to the left of the old trail. The old trail, which is now abandoned, went directly north until it met the head of Central Fork of Otter Creek. It thus passed about two miles east of Richmond. It followed down the Central Fork of Otter Creek and down Otter Creek in the general location of the present road from Richmond to Boonesborough to the Kentucky River, and one mile down the river it ended at Boonesborough.

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BOONESBOROUGH

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The Valley in which Boonesborough stood. The site of the Fort is marked by the white wall beyond the eighth cottage from the right. The Kentucky River is beyond the row of cottages

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Boonesborough. The Spring

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The Lick at Boonesborough

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The Kentucky River at Boonesborough

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The Ferry about 400 yards below Boonesborough. The first ferry in Kentucky. Established by Richard Calloway in October 1779, under a grant of the Virginia Legislature

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Tablet at Boonesborough

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